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ABSTRACT

The diversity of important work being done by women in many aspects of theatrical performance in the United States is illustrated in this journal issue. The nine articles provide discussions of the following: (1) women's careers, images, and movements in the American theatre: (2) the evolution of La Mama, an off-off-Broadway theatre group begun in New York in 1961 by Ellen Stewart: (3) the "Daughters Cycle Trilogy," the work of Roberta Sklar (its coauthor) in experimental theatre, and Sklar's current interest in feminist acting: (4) Joan Holden's role in writing and producing the plays performed by the San Francisco Mime Troup: (5) Laurie Anderson's work as a performance artist: (6) Vanessa James's design works for the stage, including costumes made of garbage bags and other "new" or reclaimable materials: (7) Yvonne Rainer's work with narrative and film: (8) Anne Bogart's work as creator and director of experimental theatre pieces: and (9) the unconventional use of the theatre's basic tools of language and movement by Linda Mussman, director of the Time and Space Limited Theatre. The text of Laurie Anderson's "Americans on the Move: Parts One and Two" is also included. (MKM)

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Women and Performance Issue

Volume 24 Number 2 (T86) June 1980

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Women and Performance Issue

An Introduction

This is not an issue on feminist theatre. Although feminist work and feminist concerns are dealt with here, they are not our primary focus.

Nor have women been relegated to a special issue because their work is not "good enough." Indeed, *The Drama Review* has consistently presented the work of women—and writing by women—in all of its issues without drawing attention to the fact. (Without making a statistical analysis, we will stand by our record on this.) The people presented here are no less important. Indeed, as a producer of avant-garde works and as a performance artist, Ellen Stewart and Laurie Anderson could be considered to be the most important figures in their areas. All of the work would be significant no matter who did it. And any of the articles could have appeared in our other issues. In fact, at least two of the articles were requested for other issues but did not work out in time to meet our deadlines.

Finally, we do not consider this issue to be segregated in an evaluative sense. (It is this concern with segregation that has prevented us for many years from doing an issue on women and/or feminism.) All of our issues, by focusing on a particular theme, are segregated in a nonevaluative way; this issue is, in this, like all others.

If these are the things the issue is not, what is it? What do we hope to accomplish here that could not be done in another way? First, we intend to emphasize the diversity of important work being done by women in all aspects of performance. (While no actresses or dancers are represented, these are the areas that are most visible, most accepted, and in which the greatest number of women are involved. We have dealt with actresses and dancers before [in T71, the Actors and Acting issue, and T65, the Post-Modern Dance issue, among others], and we will do so again.)

Second, we hoped that, by paying attention to the lives of the people as well as to their work, we could say something about our society and the sociological position of women in our theatre that would not be apparent in another context. Thus only women in the United States are covered here. An international issue on the same theme would have been much more diverse and less able to reflect specific social concerns, pressures and patterns.

M.K.

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Eva Le Gallienne in Lilliom, *1921.*

Art Versus Business

The Role of Women in American Theatre

by Helen Krich Chinoy

In the decade or more since the women's movement began, a number of books on the female experience in literature, art and architecture, film and dance have been published, but no comparable attempts have been made to identify a women's tradition in the complex art of theatre. Some excellent volumes of plays by women and some about women, some interesting articles on individuals and on the new feminist theatres, a symposium or an interview here or there have appeared. With the exception of the reissue of Rosamund Gilder's classic, *Enter the Actress*, however, no overall study has tried to see how women have used and have been used in theatre.

Yet questions about women's participation in all aspects of theatre have become more insistent. As women with new self-awareness and enthusiasm try to use theatre to explore what it means to be a woman, they also look back in the hope of locating themselves in some female tradition that will help them understand their problems in the present as well as plan for the future. Despite the public life of theatre, we know very little about the role that women have played. It has not been easy to see a female network in the composite art of theatre or to find a sense of "we-consciousness," as Simone de Beauvoir calls it, among actresses, playwrights, designers, directors and producers.

As a starting point, there is the striking evidence of women's continued and extensive participation in theatre. Acting, of course, has been the obvious career for women. If you were pretty but poor, or well-born but hard-up, with no useful skills but your feminine attractions to offer, the stage was always a possible way to earn a living. In *Aria Da Capo* Edna St. Vincent Millay neatly satirizes the easy link of women and acting. When Columbine complains that she can't act, Pierrot answers: "Can't act? Can't act? La, listen to the woman! . . . You're blond, are you not?—you have no education, have you? Can't act! You underrate yourself, my dear!" In addition to their obvious but crucial function as actresses, women—often starting as actresses—have been involved in greater numbers and in a greater variety of jobs than are indicated in the theatre history books that usually mention only the big names who made it on Broadway.

Many of these unsung women were born into theatrical families where they learned to do all that was necessary. Some added management to acting on the death of their fathers or their husbands; others started their own theatres, often the first in an outlying area, out of the need to earn a living for themselves or their children or a desire to enrich the life of a community. There were those who were the power behind the scene, managing actress daughters or enriching, or almost ghostwriting, the plays of their husbands. Various strong, independent women served theatre on their own terms, whether that meant playing male roles to satisfy their own sense of power and authority or alternatively exploiting their female sexuality in defiance of the "flabby sanctimoniousness" of good women who, they chided, dwindled into "nonentities" on marriage.

Liberated by their work in the very public, often vulgar world of theatre, they wrote plays for themselves or for others to star in, courted commercial success or struggled for personal expression. They organized companies, trained young performers in their troupes and later in notable studios and schools. They experimented with chemical and physical laws to devise new scenic effects and directed the plays they wrote to ensure that they were staged properly. They have been casting and dramatic agents, producers, financiers and lawyers for theatre. Especially since the turn of the 20th century, women have made their way into all the specialized positions in theatre, where they can be found if you have a mind to look for them and some sense of where they are most likely to be located.

For although many women have made their mark in theatre, it hasn't been easy for them to do so on Broadway or in the mainstream of theatre. In show business as in other businesses and professions, women have not easily or regularly come into positions of importance or power in the major institutions. They have been restricted by the blatant prejudice against letting women have any say where big money and decision making have been involved, as well as by their socialization into a passive but emotional self-image.

To the usual limits on female career aspirations—marriage, family, appropriate submissive behavior and acceptable feminine appearance—theatre has imposed further restrictions by being socially and morally suspect in puritanical, middle-class America. In a country where theatre was thought of as Satan's haunt and actresses often equated with harlots whose "lascivious smiles, wanton glances, and indelicate attitudes" threatened the ideal of "womanhood," the women who worked in theatre had a difficult time. Defined in this way by society, they could exploit their erotic attractions before an often largely male audience and make a rather free and easy life for themselves outside the limits of good society. Or, anxious to get on, they could fit themselves to the stereotypes acceptable to the popular audience—the innocent ingenue, the noble wife, the fallen woman. From the beginning, however, some women challenged the debased image of theatre and of women in it. Attracted by the stage, they tried to reform it and to raise the moral and esthetic level of the profession. Although they were sometimes snobbish, prudish, even priggish—reflecting what was thought appropriate when a "lady" turned to theatre—these women, through their efforts over the years and in response to changing values, eventually transformed their defensive attitudes into a dynamic idea of theatre in America.

Uncomfortable in the commercial theatre or barred from full participation, important creative women have insisted that their theatre must be more than "amusement. . . . prostituted to the purpose of vice," to quote Mercy Otis Warren, our first woman dramatist, or "more than an amusement" to quote a Sunday *New York Times* headline about Zelda Fichandler's Arena Stage. In an earlier day women dramatists and actresses spoke of themselves as "reformers" who would grace the theatre with "their own pure and blameless lives" or with the "benign influence of a noble womanly spirit," to quote Anna Cora Mowatt, the lady who wrote *Fashion*.

Olive Logan, actress, writer and bluestocking, suggested that theatre could become "a worthy channel for gifted, intelligent, and virtuous young women to gain a livelihood through" if producers would only get rid of the "leg business" made popular in hits like Ada Isaacs Menken's "nude" *Mazeppa* or *The Black Crook*. In her fascinating series of essays, *Apropos of Women and Theatre*, written in 1869, Olive Logan argued that a career on the decent, serious stage was one of the few in which women could earn equally with men and was therefore worthy of an aspiring, independent woman. Julia Marlowe, for example, was such a young woman who

Olive Logan

Mercy Otis Warren

deliberately prepared herself by hard work and careful study of Shakespeare to be a "moral force" in acting his plays. She conceded that what impelled her as an actress was "the dramatic attraction of the woman who stays pure." Her contemporary, Mary Shaw, equally idealistic, was impelled by the possibility of using the stage for a feminist vision. "Women exert a tremendous and virtually irresistible influence over the stage," she insisted. "Aristocrat of the arts and child of religion," she told the International Congress of Women in London in 1899, the drama "is a field for women." With Jessie Bonstelle, actress and director-manager of important stock companies, Mary Shaw projected a Woman's National Theatre devoted to communicating "distinctive feminine feeling or opinions," one of several such theatres planned in the early years of the 20th century.

By 1931, Eva Le Gallienne, actress-director of the Civic Repertory Theatre, could look back on this heritage of high-minded activism when analyzing "Women's Role in the Theatre" in the *Alumnae Quarterly* of Smith College, which had just given her an Honorary Degree. Her point of departure was an attack on women by Gordon Craig, who had written that "to achieve the reform of the theatre, to bring it into the condition necessary for it to become a fine art, women must have first left the boards." Miss Le Gallienne's defense began in an apologetic familiar vein, noting the absence of women in ancient theatre and the use of only "lower types of women" in "orgies of licentiousness" during the "degenerate days of Rome and the Renaissance." The modern movement in theatre, however, disavowing sexism and show business, was created by both men and women. Indeed, Le Gallienne suggested, at first somewhat hesitantly and then in stronger terms by the end of her comments, the modern theatre was in many ways the accomplishment of women. Looking at the achievements of, among others, Miss Horniman in Manchester, Lady Gregory in Ireland, Irene and Alice Lewisohn, Mary Shaw and Minnie Madern Fiske in New York, she pointed out that, as she saw it, women were really the "doers" in the development of the modern art theatre.

Looking today for what seems especially to distinguish the contributions of notable women, for a female network or feminine consciousness in American theatre, we find ourselves reinforcing Miss Le Gallienne's suggestion that, counter to Craig's perverse admonition, serving the art of theatre has in many ways been the special function of women. The women who have made major contributions to American theatre have tended to identify themselves—whether they were actresses, playwrights, directors or producers—with an idea of theatre larger than that of Broadway. In the 1920s Edith Isaacs, editor of *Theater Arts Magazine*, the journal of the art theatre movement, dubbed this alternative theatre "the tributary theatre." In her important essay, she rejected commercial New York theatre as "not an artist's goal," and urged Americans to go to "the four corners of the country and begin again, training playwrights to create in their own idiom, in their own theatres." In declaring that theatre must have a "relation, human or esthetic, to the life of the people," she sounded a call to which women have responded with unusual dedication.

The association of women with regional, institutional, little, art and alternative theatres is striking. Think of Susan Glaspell, who became an innovative playwright after founding the Provincetown Players with her husband, George Cram Cook; of Theresa Helburn, executive director for many years of the famed Theatre Guild; of Edith Isaacs, for over 25 years reviewer, editor and manager of *Theatre Arts Magazine*; of Rosamund Gilder, her disciple and associate, critic, historian, activist in the National Theatre Conference, ANTA, and voice of America through the

International Theatre Institute; of Cheryl Crawford, co-founder with Harold Clurman and Lee Strasberg of the Group Theatre, and later collaborator with Eva Le Gallienne and Margaret Webster in the American Repertory Theatre; of Hallie Flanagan Davis, creator of the Vassar Experimental Theatre and the Smith College Theatre Department and head of the great Federal Theatre Project; of Margo Jones, director-producer in Dallas, "high priestess" of the post World War II regional theatre movement; of Nina Vance of the Houston Alley Theatre; of Zelda Fichandler of the Arena Stage; of Judith Malina, guru of the Living Theatre; of Ellen Stewart, "La Mama" of the whole off-Off-Broadway theatre movement.

Most of these women turned their backs on making it on Broadway. They rejected what sociologists consider the male preoccupation with power and climbing the ladder in the "cash nexus world." Their concerns have tended to be with the values of what has been called the "status world" in which love, duty, tenderness, individuality and expressiveness are central. Their activities belong to the tradition of female rites in which, as Linda Jenkins has pointed out, performance events are used primarily for family and social bonding rather than largely for entertainment and profit. Eva Le Gallienne, to stick with her instructive experience, turned against what she felt was the "stultifying effect of a successful engagement" as a leading lady to try her hand at special matinees of "better" plays. Her determination to stage Ibsen, Hauptmann and Chekhov led to the founding of the Civic Repertory Theatre where the satisfactions of ensemble playing, repertory scheduling, low prices and free training for performers replaced the triumphs she could have easily had as a star. Other leading actresses also freed themselves from being "commodities" in the hands of producers to head their own companies or join institutional theatres or even just tour an individual production that would allow them to perform personally and culturally meaningful plays. Think of the great Minnie Maddern Fiske, who was called the "most civilizing force" of the stage of her day, of Katharine Cornell, Lynn Fontanne, Helen Hayes, Julie Harris and Irene Worth, among others.

Anna Cora Mowatt

Mary Shaw

Rosamund Gilder

Zelda Fichandler

Many of these women tend to look on their companies as family units within a larger community group, sharing, supporting, learning and teaching. They reject the "atmosphere of hysteria, crisis, fragmentation, one-shotness, and mammon-mindedness" of the Broadway system as inappropriate for the "collective and cumulative" art of theatre, to quote Zelda Fichandler. They tend to turn away from the "nameless faces and the anonymity" of New York, as Nina Vance confessed she did when she opened her Alley Theatre in Houston, where she had a "feeling of roots." They tend to work for a theatre "which is part of everybody's life. . . where there is a theatre in every town providing entertainment and enlightenment for the audience and a decent livelihood along with high artistic goals for the theatre work," as Margo Jones put it in her book, *Theatre-in-the-Round*. This sampling of quotations, it should be noted, like most of the illustrations here, antedates the new feminist theatres where these nurturant, supportive, cooperative, community values have become the basis for a new kind of theatre that can even call itself, as one feminist troupe does, "It's All Right To Be a Woman."

Much of what women did was dedicated to realizing a dream of a different kind of theatre. Perhaps this concluding sketch of the career of one woman will capture the essence of the special spirit that seems to have animated many of the women in American theatre.

During the "full, lean years" of the depression, a tiny woman in a fedora hat cast a huge shadow that covered the whole land with the vision of a different kind of theatre. Hallie Flanagan Davis during the few short years of the Federal Theatre Project made the tributary the mainstream. The educational, regional, experimental, art theatre became our national people's theatre.

When Hallie Flannagan Davis was appointed National Director of the Federal Theatre Project in August, 1935, the *New York Times* wrote that "the boys—the local gentry for whom the theatre does not exist outside Manhattan—did not quite know what to make of that." To them the appointment "represented 'art'. . . . There was headshaking. What this project needed, they said, was an old-line Broadway manager who knew the commercial theatre's devious ways."

There were many reasons why Harry L. Hopkins with President Roosevelt—and, we might add, Mrs. Roosevelt—supporting him wanted someone outside the commercial theatre, but here we only want to ask what were some of the qualities that Hallie Flanagan Davis brought to the job.

Born in South Dakota and brought up in Grinnell, Iowa, she belonged to the vast reaches of America that Broadway thought of as a "dumping ground" for some of its products. Although she eventually became part of the eastern scene, she always recalled, in often lyrical prose, the great quiet prairies and the "long summer days and long winter evenings" of a "serene childhood" and youth spent in the spacious west.

At Grinnell College she, like the rest of her group, was "imbued with the Grinnell conception of public service," and she developed a strong sense of the importance of being "part of an institution." She wrote of herself that "I can't imagine just being a floating rib someplace." She could not imagine theatre apart from the life of a group.

She started her first work experience like a latter-day Nora, trying to earn money in secret for her ailing young husband by giving drama lessons, one of the few skills this young wife had. When her husband died, she thrust herself into teaching to earn money for herself and her two children. Her first notice came as a playwright when she won a prize offered by the Des Moines Little Theatre Society in a regional contest open only to Iowans. This success plus her effective productions at Grinnell College led her to Professor George Pierce Baker's Workshop 47 at Harvard, where she earned a Master's Degree. With her small son Frederick, Davis went east to learn the art of theatre after suffering the death of both her husband and her 7-year-old son, Jack. Professor Baker, she recalled, "believed that I should give up everything and write plays. But I couldn't—I had a family to support!" All her active life she was

Hallie Flanagan Davis

concerned to support herself and her family; her work was for her no fanciful creative outlet, but a serious economic commitment. But the work was also more than just a job.

She went back to Grinnell where she used all she had learned at Harvard. A production at her Grinnell Experimental Theatre of *Romeo and Juliet*, into which she confessed that she "secretly" poured her remembrances of her young husband, won the attention that led to the award of a Guggenheim Fellowship, one of the first given to a woman. It also won her a position at Vassar College, where President MacCracken asked her to set up another experimental theatre.

With her Guggenheim Fellowship she traveled to Europe to see the *Shifting Scenes*, as she would call her book about the journey. Her exposure to the innovations of Craig, Reinhardt, Stanislavsky and especially Meyerhold sharpened her awareness of and commitment to theatre as a dynamic instrument to serve the people as they change the world around them.

In the next few years at Vassar, she and her Experimental Theatre became the "dynamo," to use another word that would become a title of one of her books, that "releases youth's burning energy... into the power of creative change." She foreshadowed the later Living Newspapers in her depression documentary and call to action, *Can You Hear Their Voices?*, and she found ways of transforming classic dramas into contemporary actions. Her innovations attracted the attention of educators, artists and critics, as well as government officials, and led eventually to her appointment as the National Director of the Federal Theatre.

When this "soft-spoken slave driver," as she was admiringly called, took on the Federal Theatre Project to employ unemployed performers, she tried to realize for the nation the values of the kind of theatre in which she had worked. With her associates she tried to create a regional, popular, educational, art theatre in which, as Harry Hopkins told her in urging her to take the appointment, "the profits won't be money profits."

Without arguing the success or failure of the Federal Theatre or the mistakes or limitations of Hallie Flanagan Davis, we can observe that she brought us nearer to the realization for the nation of the dream widely shared by other women. In her Federal Theatre, the profits were human. An actor, a playwright, a designer or a technician had a job, even if the salary was only 25 dollars a week. The roots were regional. The theatre tried to "explore sources of native American life." The accomplishments were national. Theatre became for a new audience of millions an artistic medium "of free expression," an "access to the arts and tools of civilization," and a "bulwark of the democratic form of government."

***Helen Krich Chinoy**, a professor in the Theatre Department at Smith College, is the co-editor (with Linda Jenkins) of* Women in American Theatre: Careers, Images, Movements, *which will soon be published by Crown. This article is a somewhat abridged version of her introduction to that book.*

Ellen Stewart and La Mama

by Ellen Stewart

This article was transcribed and edited from an address given by Ellen Stewart at Millennium Film Workshop, 66 East Fourth Street in New York, on March 26, 1979 as part of a seminar series organized by Howard Guttenplan, director of Millennium. While the material remains as spoken, segments have been rearranged, and answers to questions asked by spectators have been integrated to make a single piece.

The traditional or so-called conventional play has never interested me. It's not because of any great esthetic reason, it is simply that in our house we didn't have a room to ourselves. We slept in the dining room. My mother had radios that she turned on to the soaps, and we had to listen to them whether we wanted to or not. Subsequently, anything that even resembled a soap opera I would try my damnedest not to do. It's something that's lodged in me. Like a child that rebels against his parents, my rebellion manifested itself in not showing how I felt to my parents. But I hated soap operas, and to this day I do. When I came to New York, my brother took me as a very special treat to Broadway to see *A Streetcar Named Desire* with Marlon Brando, and all I wanted to do was escape, and that's the truth. What has been described as some of the greatest theatre sounded like that radio.

I wanted to go to school to be a fashion designer. In Chicago we were called "colored," and at that time a colored couldn't go to design school, they weren't admitted. I heard that a colored could go to school in San Francisco or New York, and the school you could go to in New York was Traphagen. A friend of mine was going to marry a girl who lived in New York. This girl said I could come and share her apartment; she would help me get a part-time job, and I would go to Traphagen. She said that when I arrived at Grand Central Station I should be sure to wear something very bright so she could find me. Her boyfriend and another friend came with me, and if we had waited for her we'd still be there under the clock because she never came to meet us.

I was ashamed to go back because the people had given me a little going away party and little presents, so I stayed. I got a porter's job at Saks Fifth Avenue. Three days after I arrived in New York I went into a church; I didn't know it was St. Patrick's. I set a light and asked for a job and in twenty minutes I had a "porter's" job. Edith Lances hired me.

I didn't know anyone, so every Sunday on my day off I'd ride the subway, and wherever it would stop I'd get off, and I got off this time at Delancey Street. I had never seen anything like it in my life; piles of materials just piled on the street. While I was looking, a little man came out. He had a little black thing on his head, and he was trying to sell me something, but I didn't have any money. He took me into the store, and there were his wife, his two sons and his daughter. I spent the whole day. That man was Abraham Diamond, the founder of what was called Orchard Street. I went there every Sunday after that, and I became his "artistic daughter." We had a little ritual. On Sunday, he would give me a package of fabric that I wouldn't open till I got home. I'd take my little sewing machine and make something and go back the next Sunday, and I was his "daughter and designer." He would take me all around that area and show what I made. I would wear it to Saks, and this brings me to a third-part of the story.

The colored at Saks Fifth Avenue were required to wear blue smocks. You had to have that smock on while you were in the store, but you could take it off at lunchtime. So at lunchtime when I took off my smock, I was wearing Papa Diamond's dress, and the ladies in the store decided I was a model from Paris wearing Balenciaga clothing. They wanted to buy the clothes I was wearing. I was trying to tell them, all these white ladies, "You'll make me lose my job. They're my clothes." But one of them, one of the Duponts, was determined to have the dress I was wearing that day so she went to personnel and insisted they find the model. And they found me like Cinderella in my blue smock.

I was working for Edith Lances, who made custom-made brassieres and corsets, and many ladies wanted to buy what I was wearing. Edith took me to Madame Sophie, and she said, "Look, a little genius," but Sophie said she would never give me a job. I was frightened by all this, but it just so happens that in three months—I went to work as the porter in May—and in August I was an executive designer. Edith Lances rented an entire mezzanine and set up a whole couturier establishment. She put an ad in *The New York Times* for couturier's assistants that said, "No American need apply." *Voilà*, I had a department, sewing machines, the whole works.

Several years later, I was sitting in Hotel Momora, a hotel in the Casbah of Tangier, with a friend of mine, Theresa Klein. I was no longer at Saks Fifth Avenue—I had been very ill and I was feeling sorry for myself. We were talking—I don't know if any of you know what a dybbuk is?—When I was with my Papa Diamond, he would tell me how he came from Rumania when he was 11 years old and pulled the first pushcart in that area. He told me I must always have a pushcart; that if I pushed the cart for other people it would take me wherever I wanted to go. I'm sitting there with Theresa at the hotel in Tangier, and my Papa Diamond, like a dybbuk, spoke to me when Theresa said, "Why don't you get a pushcart?" It was an experience I will never forget. It was his voice coming from this woman.

I left Tangier the next day and decided I was going to have a pushcart. I had some friends who wanted to do theatre and I was going to have a theatre and make clothing there in the daytime to support it. But once our theatre got started, I didn't have the discipline to sew. I was too busy doing other things, not writing or directing, but just doing the theatre.

● ● ●

La Mama started in 1961 in a basement at 321 East Ninth Street. That basement is there yet; I think somebody stores secondhand or antique furniture there. It was a tiny place, and our stage was only large enough to fit a single bed that we found on the street. Our plays were on the bed, under the bed, around the bed; many murders took place, ketchup was a large prop. I mean we always had ketchup; it was always bloody on the door. The bathroom was our dressing room. We did many things, but nobody ever thought to try to get beyond the bed, really. Then, lo and behold, Robert Sealy who is a marvelous playwright—he is teaching now at Rutgers—wrote a play called *The Big Cheese*, and he had a friend who was a window-display person for Bloomingdales. When this young man came to this space, the first thing he did was get rid of the bed. He found a big stuffed chair, and he took some paste and pasted a piece of cloth on the wall, and it became wallpaper. He sprinkled books around on the floor, and it became a different set. It was freedom because from that time on, in that space, we had sets. We were no longer chained to the bed; this was I think, one of the most important things that happened.

In our beginnings—with no money and the like—all small props, all makeup, all anything could be obtained by a certain system we worked in the five and dime store which was just shoplifting. I mean, in order to be a good stage manager you had to. . . well, it's the truth. You got your prop list and off you went. And it was up to you to come back with whatever was on the list, and you didn't have a quarter. But you did come back and you would have everything we needed. We didn't go beyond to other kinds of stores, but we went there for a long time.

Also, we didn't have any music other than a radio, and that was my part. I was very skilled. I could tune and know just where to switch before the announcements came on. We never had the same music twice for our renditions, and that's why I was the sound person. We were producing plays, and we would do two and three plays a week—rehearse two days, maybe half a day—and no thought was given how long to rehearse anything. The main thing was just to do them, and we were very satisfied.

We had very little audience. Most of the time we would have five or six people, at tops, to come and see what we were doing, and these were from people standing on the corner asking, "Would you please come and see our play?" When we got them to this basement that you sort of had to swing down to get into—and it was dark and we couldn't put a light there because the police were running me so—we couldn't get them to come in. But, if we got them in, nine times out of 10 they would come back. That's how our little audience began to grow. That's all I knew about producing.

That was our beginning. We stayed there until we were removed by the Buildings Department in March 1963, and we moved to 82 Second Avenue, which is now a Hispanic social club—it's upstairs, just over the florist. We stayed there until November 1964 when we had to move in a huge hurry, and we did—to 122 Second Avenue, which is just at Eighth Street, again upstairs, over what was then a martinizing cleaners.

The moves were always precipitated by the Buildings Department, who would ask the fire department, who would then ask the police department to come and give me a summons or to arrest me—for which I got convictions and spent some nights in jail, the ladies' detention center in the Village. The moves were to avoid getting a third conviction, which would make me a felon in the city of New York, and then I wouldn't be able to do anything. So it was always hurry-up moves.

We moved from 122 Second Avenue to, if you are familiar with this area, the "Bowl and Board" on St. Mark's Place. It's a beautiful place, and it's a beautiful man who owns that building—always a pioneer spirit. He let us come in, and La Mama was there until we moved to where we are next door (to the Millennium Film Workship), which became 74-A East Fourth Street. That move was on April 2, 1969. We had our first production in this building in October, and we've been here since. At "74" we had three areas for playing—two that were then large theatres, in 1969, and a smaller space. What was so good about these moves is it seems that every place we moved to in a hurry was larger. Because we were a coffeehouse theatre, we had chairs and tables, and we served pastries and coffees and some cold drinks. In the next place we had to have more tables, and we had a larger playing area.

The plays that were being written necessarily became a different kind of play for each location that we moved to. No one in our beginnings had any ideas about changing theatre, or setting up an alternative theatre, or doing anything about Off-Broadway. We were a little group of people who wanted to write plays and who would be in these plays and who really didn't know too much about theatre at all; certainly I knew nothing. That was the way we started. We learned because nature forced us to learn by making us move—adapting to different environments—out of which our kind of theatre seemed to evolve.

I worked three jobs; tha's where the money came from. When I started at La Mama, I was on unemployment. I had stopped working regularly. I was ill for a few years and couldn't work very much. I had quite a reputation as a designer for Saks so I would free-lance. I would work for Bergdorf Goodman, Henri Bendel or anybody until I made enough money to claim unemployment, and then I would quit and wouldn't do anything. When I started La Mama, our needs dictated I had to get a job, and I did—doing children's swimwear for Dive-ettes. That wasn't enough money, so I augmented that working for other persons and still doing a design gig here and there. I worked like that to support La Mama until 1971 when I was ill again, and the doctor said I had to stop one or the other. I stopped working.

In 1964 Paul Foster wrote a play called *Hurrah for the Bridge*. He had a friend named Edgar, a sculptor from Colombia. Edgar went home, and a group of students there were going to participate in a Festival of Cali. They wanted to do something different. He suggested Paul's play, and we sent it to him; they translated it and won the competition, which meant going to Erlangen, Germany, to perform the winning play. The cost of the trip from New York to Germany was paid by the Germans. The Colombian army flew them from Bogota to Florida, and the sculptor in Bogota held an auction for the fare to New York. All 18 of them stayed with me, wall to wall in my three room apartment until they left for Germany. The Danes who were performing there also saw the play; Jens Okking, the director liked it, and wrote to me asking if I had other plays. I said, "I have plenty, but could you get critiques?" I agreed to let them do the plays if they could get critiques.

In the meanwhile Tom Eyen had written a play called *The White Whore and the Bit Player* as a curtain-raiser for his "masterpiece" *My Next Husband Will Be a*

Tom Eyen's *The White Whore and the Bit Player*

Beauty. In those days a play had to run an hour. *My Next Husband* ran 35 minutes, so he wrote *The White Whore and the Bit Player* 15 minutes long, for Mary Claire Charba. Nobody remembers *My Next Husband Will Be a Beauty* but *White Whore* is a classic. Mary Claire Charba was the Whore, Jacque Lynn Colton was the bit player. They were affluent, and their parents let them go to Paris. They mounted the play in what was then the English Bookstore. The electric people there were on strike and so the critics came with candles through the streets to critique it. I had this news from Paris that you could get critiques. I went to David Davies at the American Center and proposed making a La Mama Paris there and he agreed. Thus I felt this could be an answer to a problem we had in trying to get some of the plays published that had been written. You see, critics would not come to see our work in those early years and publishers would not read the plays submitted by us because they had not been critiqued. Thus, since the Danes were getting critiques for our plays that they were doing in Denmark and it seemed that we would get critiques from the French critics in Paris, we decided to go to Europe.

That's the reason why in 1965 we got on a student ship, 16 people with one-way tickets at $118 a ticket, 22 plays, and off we sailed to Paris and later to Copenhagen. Our directors were Tom O'Horgan and Ross Alexander. Again, if the critics had come to see our plays, then perhaps we never would have gone to Europe, and perhaps everything we've accomplished by going every year thereafter—and the enormous potential that was opened up in all those who did go for this kind of exposure—could never have happened. It was a very important thing that the critics did not come to see us in New York.

We certainly didn't impress the Parisians because the night I put Jean-Claude van Itallie's *America Hurrah* in the American Center for the Arts in Paris, David Davies, who was the head of the establishment, gave me 24 hours to get out of Paris. Well, this man was so upset, if you think about it, because it was 1965, and when Seth Allen began to draw the cock on the wall—there was absolute silence in a room which was about this size. Although he allowed me to set up tables with candles on them like La Mama, he meant, "Get out!"

Our finances were not much, and we worked all that night to pack up the dolls. The dolls were made by Robert Wilson, who was in La Mama at that time. We packed them in a crate, and I bargained with the French railroad to let me ride in the freight car with the dolls in order to get to Denmark because I didn't have enough money to pay for the dolls and me. They agreed, and that's how we got to Copenhagen.

The press in Denmark called us "lovable, adorable little puppies." Really, that's what they said. They loved our spirit, the love that seemed to come from us, but they all agreed we could not act and knew absolutely nothing about theatre. But the energy and what we exuded across the stage was enough to invite us back for the following year. (As for Paris we didn't go near there until we returned in 1970 with three plays directed by Wilford Leach and John Braswell—these productions were an enormous success.) But the La Mama Troupe directed by Tom O'Horgan returned to Denmark, Sweden, Yugoslavia and England in 1966; and in 1967 we went to Italy, Austria, Germany, Holland, Denmark, Sweden, Yugoslavia, England, Scotland; and that's how it snowballed. Finally we were being invited every place.

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In 1966, Brice Howard, who then was the executive director of what was National Educational Television, told me he was going to set a precedent or break all the laws

Jean-Claude van Itallie's *America Hurrah*

and produce some off-Off-Broadway plays. They were going to be called *Three from La Mama*. He was going to do Sam Shepard's *Fourteen Hundred Thousand*, Jean-Claude van Itallie's *Pavane*, which later became *Interview*, and Paul Foster's *Recluse*. He said he was going to do these plays, but for the most part our actors couldn't play in them. He would compromise in one way. He would let Tom O'Horgan direct those plays—give him a chance--and if he failed, a regular television person would do it. But the actors. . . no. He agreed that Joseph Chaikin could be in it, and there were a few others who were allowed to act in those plays. He said our actors couldn't act.

Brice Howard lost his job because he put those three plays on. They are still at NET and now considered priceless; I mean, they are so proud of them, they bring them out and show them every now and then.

Someone told me about a place called Actors Studio, and he told me where it was. So I went up to Actors Studio, and when you go in there, there's always somebody sitting at a large desk, and there are a few couches to the side with actors lounging there. I went and I told them my name was Ellen Stewart, and I had a little theatre, and I had come there to get someone to come and teach us how to act because I understood that they had actors who could do this. The actors sitting there, I don't know who they were. . . I get a little emotional to think they laughed at me. The person behind the desk laughed, and they made fun. I'm crying a little bit now. Out I went.

I talked to Tom O'Horgan, and we decided to make our own way to make actors. Now I love music, but I don't play. Tom O'Horgan is a musicologist—from the age five until his voice changed he sang in the Chicago Civic Opera. There's no instrument he can't compose on just automatically, and his forte is music. Tom O'Horgan was also a trained ballet dancer; he's a little paunchy now. So our workshop was going to be based in music and dance.

Tom had only worked in opera, in the operatic technique he was interested in. In school he was trying to evolve a way through notation so that when an opera singer sang the score it would be so notated—that he knew to take one, two, three steps to the left, and do this, this, this—because it seemed to be so difficult to act and sing. This is still a life's work with him.

So, using this theory and using music, we added one more thing—Tom had a friend whose nephew was born retarded and this child's mother discovered a doctor who was experimenting with a body technique. This young doctor found that the one parallel thing in all retarded and autistic children was that they never crawled. That phase of life they seemed to skip. He was doing experiments that if you could get them to crawl, what would it mean? He had his experiments in a little basement. He got five mothers with retarded children and they helped one another. One mother held the head of the child, and one held each limb, and he synchronized the breathing of the mothers with the breathing of the child. It was very difficult because you couldn't have the slightest ripple or wrong beat in the rhythmic breathing. Then, at a signal almost as though he was orchestrating, the mothers would crawl the child, and there were fantastic results.

Well, with lovable little puppies, that was the beginning of our training. One of the things Tom used was a big table we had down in the second basement that I rented. The actors would crawl on the table, and that's how he managed to begin to synchronize their bodies. Any of you who might have seen Rochelle Owens' *Futz* or the original Rado/Ragni/MacDermot *Hair* on Broadway—they were the result of the Tom O'Horgan workshop. In subsequent years, with Broadway and the things that happen to people, he hasn't worked like that, but in the beginning this was the way it was.

At La Mama, we continued to try to evolve a theatre that goes beyond the word but always begins with a text. If Brice Howard had not impressed me that we were so bad, and certainly if Actors Studio had just been a little nicer, perhaps I never would have tried to have a workshop that would create an actor. In Russia I was with Lee Strasberg, and he told me, "Ellen, that is the best thing that could have happened to you because if we had come there La Mama never would have been," and that's really true.

We played in Zagreb at the youth festival in 1966. We were the first Americans ever invited to that festival. Andrei Serban was there from Rumania. I saw his production and decided he didn't know how to move energy inside his actor, but it really couldn't get out. Once the actor walked to where he was going and got into the image he had conceived, it was just incredible. So I got this dream that with our energies and with what we do, what would it be like to mix these two together? What kind of theatre would we have? I started working from then on to get him to America, which I managed to do in 1969, and he's been here since. I went to see Grotowski in 1965, and I worked until 1967 to bring him to America—again to mix with our theatre.

At the same time I was sending Tom O'Horgan to Europe, and they were doing some mixing there. I've always believed in cross-pollination—one learning from the other, a give and take, an exchange.

In 1967 we went to Germany and played at the Kammerspiel in West Berlin. Thirisi Geise, one of the greatest German actresses who was in residence there, loved Tom O'Horgan and his work and thought we were pretty fantastic. We did *Futz*, Paul Foster's *Tom Paine*, Sam Shepard's *Melodrama Play*. I was having a problem at the time—the police were after me again at home—and I had no place to go. Thirisi Geise heard about this and she convinced the officials at the Kammerspiel to invite the entire troupe to come to Germany. They would support us, and they would give me a year to get La Mama back on its feet until we found someplace to go. They annnounced this at a party for us, and at the party was a young man named Peter Stein. We became friends, and Peter told me that he wanted to direct but there was nothing he could do. It was ironic that La Mama, a foreign troupe, could be offered this, and yet he didn't have space for his plays. So I told the officials that there was a young playwright there named Martin Sperrer who wanted to write plays. I suggested that if we did not come they should turn over their space, the Green Room, as a workspace for Peter Stein and Martin Sperrer. That's how their workshop began. This

Rochelle Owen's *Futz*

same Peter now has four million dollars a year for his troupe. He has a space four times the size of ours, equipped so that an entire wall can descend into the ground and come up with remarkable things. Every kind of motor, anything modern technically, he has, and he does great art with it. Robert Wilson is in Germany in Peter Stein's theatre because Peter is helping him. Robert can't get anything in America and Peter has millions. Robert with all his great talent is like a pauper there, begging.

Peter Stein has not become commercial. He has used everything he has so well it is a wonder to see what his money does do. I don't think he can be faulted for his money; he puts living film onstage. He's a master, so you're happy he has the money to do it.

It's just been a steady, hard, long haul. We believed in what we were doing when perhaps nobody else did. Our European following was much larger than anything we had in America. We began in 1961, and it wasn't until 1967-68 that we began to get recognition for our work in America. It took that long.

Joe Cino preceded me. He is the father of off-Off-Broadway, and I am the Mama. He came in 1958, La Mama came in 1961 and after us came other places. As other places joined the movement, the audiences grew. Whoever supported one, his curiosity would bring him to others.

You have to have faith in doing plays whether you have an audience or not. If economics force you to do one thing to survive, then your need to survive dictates how much of yourself you can dedicate to doing what you want. We only did what we wanted, and we still do only that. I am under constant criticism for being eclectic. I have the honor of supposedly introducing the four-letter word in theatre, nudity in theatre. These things are taken for granted today, it's true, but consider introducing them in 1963, 1964, 1965, when it was unheard of. That's what we wanted to do; that's what we did, and it holds true today.

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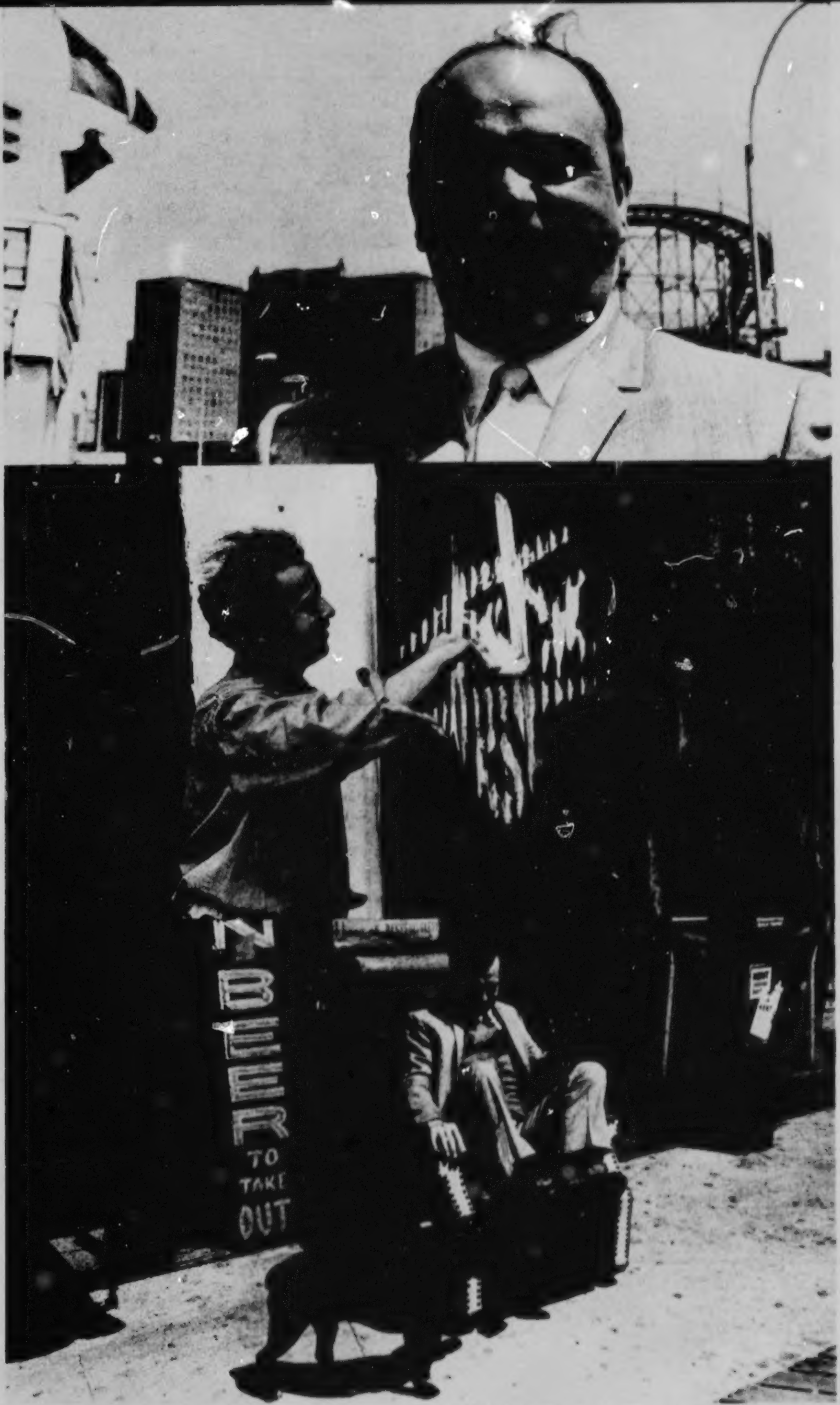
I don't think the nature of off-Off-Broadway has changed. What's radically changed is attitude. Many of us receive some money from foundations. That's how we exist. By the same token, we are greatly encouraged to do what the foundations call "generating income." Therefore, you are told matter of factly that money is not given to you to grow or for anything you like but to "show cause." "Show cause" to them is success, and success is predicated on the commercial viability of the production. That simply has happened. For persons who would criticize an off-Off-Broadway theatre for doing a play that could move to Broadway, and generate income, and encourage the foundations to give them their subsidy the following year—they aren't in so pleasant a situation. Furthermore, I don't think it's absolutely necessary that an artist starve because he's an artist. I don't think it bastardizes or prostitutes his art if it happens.

I have never had a workshop where plays are developed. I believe in a text. You might not agree with what happens to the text but in our productions the text is always there. I have not found interesting a text that several people had input in.

We were the first to do Pinter in this country. He was my kind of playwright, you see—the abstract work or what has come to be called abstract. These plays were not in the conventional genre. They were plays that could be reflected in music or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From top, James Coco, Joseph Chaikin and Paul Dooley in *Three from La Mama*

movement. They were the things I tried to do more than listen to what somebody, anybody, had to say. Pinter's writing is orchestrated; if you read it, it's like hearing music. I feel the music in what he is writing, and I think that's his greatest strength on the stage. His directing is also a kind of orchestration. This is what appeals to his public.

I think a play should have as many words as the author would like it to have, but in the world today the playwright has to give license that one can use his play—that one can do away with words and substitute movement or music or dance for much of what is spoken. But the written must be there to inspire what is movement or music. Often the playwright simply will not let you play with his play.

I choose many of the plays I do, but for the most part I choose the people who are going to do the plays and they choose the play. Who is doing the work is always very important. But for me, what I feel about the person would be the thing that would influence me to move in whatever direction I move. I enjoy everything I'm doing because I do what I want to do, always hoping something good will come to whoever is concerned. My good comes from the fact that they've done the work I wished they would do with me.

Roberta Sklar: Toward Creating A Women's Theatre

an interview by Cornelia Brunner

Roberta Sklar is one of the three artistic directors of The Women's Experimental Theatre and a co-author with Clare Coss and Sondra Segal of *The Daughters Cycle Trilogy: Daughters, Sister/Sister,* and *Electra Speaks.*

Sklar began her work as a student-director at Hunter College in 1960. She was active in the off-Off-Broadway theatre movement at its inception in the early sixties and frequently directed new plays at the Caffe Cino. In the mid-1960s she joined The Open Theatre and was the co-director of the major ensemble works *The Serpent, Terminal* and *The Mutation Show* and directed Beckett's *Endgame*. These works toured both the United States and Europe and have been widely acclaimed. Throughout the sixties she worked extensively with playwrights and actors in the creation of new works and new work methods.

In the 1970s she began an ongoing research into the development of a feminist esthetic for the theatre. She carried out an actor-research project at Bard College and Hunter College (1971-1976), exploring sex-role assignments and their impact on acting methods. She is a major contributor to the developing field of women's theatre. She directed *The Cinderella Project* by the Womanrite Theatre Ensemble, co-authored and directed *Obscenities and Other Questions* by the Women's Unit and *The Daughters Cycle* at The Women's Experimental Theatre.

The plays of *The Daughters Cycle Trilogy* are a serious exploration from a feminist viewpoint of women's lives in the patriarchal family. *Daughters*, the first part, is the most musical of the plays. It depicts the primary, but deeply denied, relationship between mother and daughter in a series of physical and vocal images, poems, chants and questions about merging, yearning, pulling apart and separating. An example: a sideline chorus directs the audience's attention to the action at the center of the stage and repeats the dialog. In the center, mother and daughter are going through a series of overtures and retreats using the lines "Ma, you home?" and "It's getting late!" The chorus describes: "The mother walks to the daughter, opens her extended hand. The daughter crosses away from the mother. The mother smiles, the daughter turns away. . . ." After a while, the gestures of the mother-daughter relationship start to disintegrate. They take on each other's movements and get locked in a series of repetitions and role-related gestures. Eventually, the mother and daughter pose together, and the scene ends with the threat of separation: "Shut up. Sit still. Sit still, or I'll walk out that door and leave you."

At another point, the daughters swear an oath, sealing the contract they have been forced to make with their mothers to prevent final separation. Each one's contractual obligation is different, each recognizable: "I agree never to know what I want. I agree not to be myself. I agree to be the victim. I agree not to notice the depth of my deprivation. I agree to want what you can't give. I agree not to look for it anywhere else. I agree to make the same agreement over and over with everyone always!" The play ends with a series of questions about mothers and daughters addressed to the audience, after which, in an epilog, a daughter recites "A Fragment from a Letter to my Mother," an appeal for mutual comforting written to an aging mother. The play describes much of the ambivalence and conflict daughters feel about their mothers, and it expresses many of the hopes and wishes of many women for some better love between them.

Sister/Sister, the second play of the trilogy, is similar in that it portrays the complexities and ambivalences in which women are enmeshed in relationships with sisters in the family by showing images of loving intimacy and terrible betrayal. The play is often humorous, especially when it names some of the rules of family life. It builds on images created in the first play. The lines "Ma you home?" and "It's getting late!," for instance, are repeated in a scene in which sisters compete for the attention of the mother. Daughters construct shifting patterns of competition, betrayal, and alliance as new sisters enter the field. Eventually, the immutable roles inherent in the sibling position are described: THE BABY "is cute as the dickens and tries to stay that way." She learns to get her way by crying. She is sensual,, fun to play with, pampered, and has no real incentive to grow up. THE OLDEST is "the original baby. . . who saw herself replaced over and over." She is the guinea pig, the responsible one, the trailblazer, the first to reach puberty. "All of the family's sexual feelings exploded on me." She is forever the big sister, and she resents it. THE MIDDLE SISTER has a full-time job being in the middle. "Her every act is a betrayal of someone." Her position is illustrated by the physical image of a woman running in a figure-eight around two seated women, her eye always on the one she is running toward, never on the one she's with.

The second act addresses itself directly to the audience, asking questions about women's relationships to their sisters, reading poems about sisters and letters to sisters. In the middle of the second act, there is a section in which all the siblings in a family plead their case. They are telling of their mother's death and of the havoc it wrought with the relationships inside the remaining family. After a series of short and often humorous scenes of separations, reunions and reminiscenses between sisters, the play ends with a call to sisterhood from the audience.

Electra Speaks, the final play of the trilogy, starts with the repeated telling of the history of violence toward women in the myths about the house of Atreus. The story is retold five times, moving from the patriarchal tale to a feminist inquiry. Then the women in the story speak in their different voices: Clytemnestra, who must sacrifice her daughter to her husband's ambition; Iphigenia, the innocent victim; Cassandra, the spoils of war, the "other woman" through no choice of her own. Even the male-identified goddess Athena, called upon to defend Orestes when he is tried for murdering his mother, gets a chance to speak. When Electra tries to speak for herself, her efforts are described almost as by a radio sportscaster: a running blow-by-blow account of a woman's attempt to speak for herself that is at once a piece of comedy and raw declaration—a description of the ways in which women have been rendered mute.

Electra Speaks

In the second act, the family drama is played out on a less mythical stage: a little girl's introduction to the real source of power (and threat) in her life, an adolescent's bitter battle with her mother in the kitchen, a mother's advice to her daughter on the eve of her wedding. The familiar names remind the audience of the danger: Iphigenia was killed by her father; Clytemnestra was killed by her son. In the final scene, Electra tries to speak again. She is trying to say something about her father, to eulogize him, to come to terms with her own victimization. Eventually, she stops the obsessiveness about her father and decides to step out on her own. The final image is of Electra leaving her family, clearly a prerequisite for a woman who is trying to learn to speak for herself.

The parts of the trilogy build on each other but can be fully appreciated separately and in any order. The plays all start with the naming of the matrilineage of the actors, thus setting a context of matrilineal heritage. The first two plays describe the context in which the relationships between women in the patriarchal family must be explored. In the third play, the analysis is begun: it looks at the contradictions between the myths of the family and its realities. It calls upon the women in the audience to speak for themselves.

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What made you choose experimental theatre over other modes of artistic expression?

I've always been interested in the question, "How do you externalize internal reality?" Back in the early 1960s, techniques for doing this seemed to consist of an emotional aside in the middle of a social interchange. The aside was always spoken sotto voce; but I knew that the inner life, the feelings and impulses inside, are not really sotto voce. If anything, they are a loud and insistent accompanying sound, and much of the time they are a deafening roar! Realizing this was a clue: It was the beginning of a path for me, of looking into some other realities.

Something about this perception, that there is more going on in any social interaction than meets the eye, that the inner life is real, was validated for me in college when I first discovered Ionesco, the Beat poets, and the whole avant-garde. I discovered that an impulse can be looked at, that you can study it and know things about it, and articulate it without having to give it a history. The cultural environment then—at least the sophisticated avant-garde environment you could find if you were a college kid hanging around the Village—supported the idea that the nonrational was valid and as real as the social conventions we were used to. My first real involvement with this theatrically was, strangely enough, through medieval art. Well, not really so strangely: I became interested in it because it isn't "real." I was also drawn to medieval art because I had this flirtation going with Christ. I think it was all about validating the spiritual dimension of life—and about leaving home. I no longer needed Christ for that after a while, but when you come from an assimilating family that is getting rid of its Jewishness but not acquiring something else, there is no special place for your soul. So, that interest in Christianity was an expression of something I couldn't really name at the time, at age 18 or 20, something transcendent.

I got money from the theatre department at Hunter, where I went to college, to do the Christmas play. I rented these incredibly beautiful medieval costumes and medieval musical instruments and created tableaux. The central one was about the Annuciation. There was an unconscious feminist focus in this: Mary is about to bear, through "parthenogenesis," the one who rules the world spiritually. There is great beauty to the exchange between Mary and the archangel. After college I pursued medieval art all over Europe. Eventually I gave up Christ and went on. But before then, that late adolescent feeling of being more than I seemed to be found some expression through my interest in Christian art and Medieval theatre.

Another thing that really attracted me to medieval art was its episodic structure. I found it in medieval art, in Brecht, and in the German Expresionist theatre. I was drawn to all of them. Usually the episodes are played sequentially, but I could always envisage them performed simultaneously as well. I've never had a chance to play something that way, but my work now comes close to it: linear sequence is almost irrelevant in *Electra Speaks*. What interests me about episodic structure has to do with expressing the inner life: When something happens in a room, the dynamics continue after the act. At any given moment things are happening sequentially as well as simultaneously. The emotional place I may be responding to you from can shift in age. I may be speaking to you as a five-year old even though my body is 39 years old. Science fiction-bred kids understand this: Everything is happening at the same time according to where you are in the universe. When men talk about this, it is considered futuristic; when women talk that way, we are considered hysterical: "She doesn't know if whe's five or 45!" In the theatre, one of the main innovators in this sense was Viola Spolin. She developed classic exercises using transformations, rapid changes. One of the most brilliant expresisons of this idea that I ever saw was work done by Nichols and May in the early 1960s. I remember being thrilled and shocked when I first saw them: They were playing a love scene, and suddenly Elaine May was four years old, and then, in a split second, she turned into his mother! It happened so fast, I was shocked. I turned to the person I was with and said, "Did you see that!" It was astounding.

R.D. Laing's *The Politics of Experience* became a kind of guidebook for many of us who were interested in this view of psychological reality. It validated the irrational; it fell in love with schizophrenia. It gave men who had lost their sense of macho under the threat of the mushroom cloud a description of reality to agree with, but it never said anything about women. Women knew all along that feelings don't happen in logical sequence, but now men were discovering it. The "crazy" woman as a symbol of the nonrational: First they call her crazy, and then they call her wonderfully crazy! Episodic structure fits that understanding of reality: that, as every woman knows, life is a constant three-ring circus rather than some linear tale of adventure.

Did you get a chance to do this kind of theatre work right after college?

When I graduated from Hunter I was offered the only fellowship in the theatre department in the graduate school. This was the first time the fellowship was offered to a woman. (Some nonsense about how it included work in the shop, too much physical work for a woman, so when they offered it to me, they asked me to direct a production instead!) I graduated in January, and the fellowship didn't start until September. In between, I worked in different places, mainly at the Caffe Cino, a little at La Mama, and some summer stock.

The Caffe Cino was a place where I continued to put on short plays even after I was in graduate school. It was an environment that really allowed for experimentation. It was the very beginning of the male homosexual theatre that was "out." It was really "anything goes." I was not ready for "anything goes," but it was a great environment to learn in. It included a community of people who came night after night because they were interested. We'd watch each other's work, hang around and explore and chew the fat. I was five to 10 years younger than most of the people—mostly men—there. I was one of the few women, but the atmosphere was not oppressive, it was too far out. For me, it was liberation. I had made the move from Brooklyn to Manhattan, I had crossed the bridge, and it was thrilling! We used to get paid with a sandwich and a cup of coffee—that was considered having dinner. They'd pass the hat and we'd get a share of the take.

I was shocked by having no money. I was a middle-class kid, broke for the first time. I had only one regular job, something clerical, but I had to give it up when it started to cut into my rehearsal time. Of course, I was never really fully integrated into the crowd at the Caffe Cino. The male homosexual society there did not deliberately reject or exclude me, but for me it was like living in a foreign country, rich and stimulating—I was an expatriate of Brooklyn, not a native of the Caffe Cino! But I learned and developed because everybody was very serious about what they were doing artistically. Experimentation was taken seriously.

Meanwhile, back at graduate school, things were not quite that progressive. My "big" production that year was *The Good Woman of Szechuan*. I wanted to do *In the Jungle of the Cities*, also by Brecht, but that play was considered too raw. I settled for a more acceptable play; I got very involved with it anyhow. Like anyone I have ever known who became seriously involved with a Brecht play, I was changed by it. Years

***The Good Woman of Szechuan*, male mask**

later I met Helene Weigel. I saw her give several performances of Brecht plays. I always felt that a performer of that dimension has to have made a major contribution to the creation of the plays. But there is no mention of her anywhere as a collaborater—only as his wife. I also discovered, in the course of research on Brecht, that he had an assistant, Elizabeth Hauptmann, who was with him for more than twenty years and who worked on all his plays. God knows what influence she had! The only play where her collaboration is acknowledged is *Happy End*, and I've always suspected that the reason he acknowledged her was because the play was universally panned. Anyhow, it was my first big play. I was working with broad concepts, a large scope, social concerns, a wide perspective. Those concerns are still of interest to me. I also liked working with actors on that scale.

The next play I did was *Cry in the Street* by Ralph Lauchner, a German Expressionist play. I was working with these three guys—one of them was Robert De Niro; it was his first job in New York. We were working with grotesque images and with animal images, physical play and so on. This was an unusual production, exploring the nonrational. The play was typically expressionist, filled with flashes of hope and pain and the need to piss. It gave me the opportunity to work with these actors in an outrageous way. And all three of them were willing to explore and able to work with me in a very open way. This graduate school professor who hated "women like me" (I had no idea what he meant by that), and who was incredibly rude and horrible to me, and dying to put down my work, came to see one extraordinary rehearsal in which the actors were totally alive in their bodies in ways I never saw again until years later at the Open Theatre. The guy hated me, but he had to admit that the work was remarkable, especially after the play was performed and the whole faculty saw and liked it. This was my first experience with overt institutional sexism. Hunter College had been a very nurturant environment, an all-women school with many admirable women to teach us and to encourage us.

All through this time I was studyng acting with Irene Daily. I was getting a thorough education in traditional acting techniques, in what they were about. I became very interested in figuring out how to work with actors. What kind of director I am is very much related to this. There are schools of abuse in directing. The idea is to rid the actors of all their defense mechanisms through verbal and often—with women—sexual abuse. The teacher-director acts as god-guru. You are supposed to let him use the whip to break you down so he can build you up again from scratch. As a woman, I had the choice of being this sort of tyrant as a director, or of being the Mother. I wasn't interested in either role, and Irene Daily was a good role model. She was very clear in her relations to the students as far as I could tell. She kept a healthy distance. She was loving without being Mom. You have to remember that at the time the question "Can men take direction from a woman?" was taken seriously. It was assumed that it would take a special actor to be able to take direction from a woman. Maybe it did.

Anyhow, this was the beginning of a period in which I thought a good deal about how to work with actors. The work is so intense, it's like dreaming the same dream. The actor, the human being, becomes the content—as you do yourself. When you work as I do, the question of your subject matter, the content you focus on, comes up early. There are areas that have become a life-study for me—or at least they seem to be nagging questions. the question "What occurs in the family structure?," for instance, is based on the question "How do you articulate internal reality?" I am interested in the inner as well as the social reality of the family structure, and in their relationship to each other. For example, an early experiment with this was about the question "What part of the dialog is really being spoken between the people and what part comes from another voice, and how do you express that other voice?" We did an exercise at the Open Theatre that was called "The Unnoticed Action." It was to explore the impulses that don't fit into social reality. Until the lid came off for me as a woman, I didn't even fully see the depth of this arena. What became clear in the 1970s was this: For women, the internal reality is filled with the social suppression of womanhood. There are layers and layers of it. The first layers are rage and such, but then there is layer after layer of suppressed self-knowledge. *That* reality is the content of women's theatre—and the basis of all my work, whether it be writing, the development of feminist acting techniques or directing.

How did you become involved with the Open Theatre?

Joe Chaikin and I were introduced to each other by Michael Smith, a friend and a critic for *The Village Voice*, who realized that we were doing the same kind of work. We were both trying to foster and support an essentially subversive consciousness in ourselves, the actors we worked with and the audience. I joined the Open Theatre in 1968 as a director because it was a place where this kind of exploration was going on. Of course, for the women, there was a deep lack of *self*-consciousness. We were saying, "We want to live in a society in which our inner lives can exist in a full way," and yet, as women, we were talking about the inner life as men define it. I wasn't only oppressed by Exxon and General Motors but most immediately by the men around me, but I didn't know it at the time. The privilege of male bohemian self-expression helped me to grow in self-knowledge. It was patriarchal, the parameters of growth were limited for me, but I grew. The Open Theatre years are the precursors of my present work; this is true, much the same as the way in which I learned about symbolism by reading the work of, say James Joyce. I learned about the world; I just didn't have an opportunity to learn enough about myself.

The struggle to articulate a sense of self becomes evident to me when I look back to the creation of the last directorial work I did at the Open Theatre, *The Mutation Show*. For me, it was really the beginning of my feminist expression, and it was the piece about which there was the greatest struggle between Chaikin and me. During the earlier pieces, I worked much the way women did in the peace movement and in the student movement: We did a lot of the work, got little of the credit, and didn't realize yet that there was a major section missing in the political analysis—the section that was about us.

On the other hand, I was really involved in learning how to collaborate, to build on each other in an exchange. I was raised, like everyone else, in a tradition of individual achievement. How do you collaborate and yet name what you have done? This was a continual issue in my life. It's much less of an issue now, but at the time there was a lot of Puritanism in our handling of group process. No claims were allowed, but of course, Chaikin always got the credit for our work, whether or not he laid any claim to it—that's patriarchy! But I was learning to collaborate—with Chaikin as co-director, with writers, and with the actors. These forms of collaboration were all very different and all very interesting to me. I liked all parts of the work. I have always really liked functioning on all burners at the same time. It seems to me to be a true reflection of reality: a constant pulsation everywhere. I don't feel overwhelmed by it. If you do, you can't work like that. The company was large at the time, about 30 people were working on *The Serpent*. Work used to go on in many rooms at the same time. This was an arena I liked. It was a place that reflected an enormous number of different dynamics that you could observe, and portray and create from. It provided the material and the human energies to really shape the panorama.

Esthetically, work in a large company was associated with a shift for me. In visual terms, it could be expressed as a shift from an interest in a painter like Van Eyck to an interest in Breughel and Bosch—from a focus on a single beautiful woman to a canvas containing an untold number of people doing a great number of different things. Bosch is the holocaust, after the bomb, the grotesque. Breughel, more interesting to me, is a vast array that looks more or less like a normal day in the fields, but somewhere in the picture someone is doing something socially outrageous. The clear presence of sexuality, for instance, in everyday life or, like "The Fall of Icarus": the whole thing is a seaport landscape, and if you look very, very carefully at the ocean, you will see less than a quarter inch of two little legs sticking out of the waves—and that's Icarus. That's what I could envision working on with 20 or 30 actors, a small world, a whole society.

There was an interesting central conflict at the Open Theatre almost the whole time: Are we artists or are we political? The discussion was articulated in the work itself. I wanted to be both; I saw no conflict. I knew art was supposed to be pure, spirit rather than social reality, but I realized that inner reality is social as well, that inner reality is not only about transcendence. I didn't just want to transcend the social reality so that I could continue to be oppressed but no longer care. I realized that this view, keeping politics out of art, kept people from participating in communicating about, and changing, political reality. We learned in the 1960s that neither the scientist nor the artist can "keep politics out" of her work. We didn't know about the daily-ness of politics before then. We grew up under the threat of the cold war and atomic annihilation. We thought it made sense to feel grateful to the government for protecting us from this threat. The great insight of our generation, I think, was that it matters what the U.S. does "over there" in Indonesia even though it is not happening to us right now and right here. I wanted to have an impact on that worldwide arena through my work. Politics was a whole dimension that expanded the layers of reality available to me. I really understood that the personal is political.

The running argument we had at the Open Theatre about politics and art brought out the latent racism and sexism in the company. The racism became evident first. When we toured Europe the second time, we wanted to dedicate the performances to the struggle of the Black Panther Party in the U.S. Eventually, everyone agreed to do it. But, when at the end of the tour, in Amsterdam, a genuine Black Panther wanted to address the audience after the performance and make a pitch for money, there was an incredible furor in the company: "We are a theatre, not a political organization! It would ruin the impact of the play! etc." Some of us thought it made sense to let him speak, of course, and wished we had thought of passing the hat for the Panthers all along, and we ended up prevailing. But the issue was clearly up and never to be resolved.

For me, it became clear that the underlying struggle was about sexism. Feminism started to have an impact. *The Mutation Show* was an important example. It has been written about and discussed in many ways but never with an understanding of its basically feminist content. It has been called a play about change and distortion and transformation, but the feminist women who came to see it realized that it was, among other things, about women. It contains two stories: one, often mentioned as if it were the only one, is about Kaspar Hauser, and the other one is about a little girl, Kamala, who was raised by wolves. Missionaries killed the wolf pack to capture her. They slaughtered before her eyes the only mother and siblings she knew in order to forcibly socialize her into womanhood. She never learned to speak very much, nor did she live very long, but she *did* end up wearing a dress and walking upright. They had a particularly hard time getting her to defile her own space by using an indoor toilet! They broke her to turn her into some social image of a woman.

The male view of this story was something about how the natural beast is more noble than social distortions make us. The women saw a girl-child brutally ripped from her nurturer, a familiar story of the denial of the mother-daughter relationship, her back broken to be reshaped to stand upright, and forced into a garb that has nothing to do with her body. She is taught to walk, and the next scene is called "The Human Act": the wedding. They saw her captured on a rope, an incredible struggle for freedom played by Tina Shepard without words. A man from the company was pulling her up by the rope. One of the actors said at the time, "Maybe a woman should be doing this, because this way it looks as if it is saying something about men and women, rather than about power relationships." The women understood that this was *not* a contradiction.

***The Mutation Show*, power relations scene**

Many people have written about that play, in which the climaxing scene is a wedding, with many different kinds of couples dancing down the aisle, and never mentioned the theme of power relationships between men and women. To me, the wedding was not a metaphor about how the Shah of Iran is in collusion with the Prime Minister of Israel, it was *about* how men and women dance with each other, about how men have never looked at the girl—at who she is and how she might develop—but have rather decided what she should be, and about how she is broken and distorted into that shape. This was a feminist work, and many of the women who worked on it have gone on to create women's theatre. Tina Shepard worked with Karen Malpede's group for a long time. Joanne Schmidman is one of the people running The Magic Theatre out in Omaha, which is a feminist theatre, and I have been doing feminist theatre ever since.

So many forms of sexism were becoming evident! For years, for instance, many of the men had been doing draft counseling whenever we did performances on college campuses. But when Tina Shepard and I started doing abortion outreach (not counseling, just short speeches announcing demonstrations and such), there was a lot of tension about it: Would it interfere with rehearsal time? Would it alienate the audience?, etc. Unbelievable! At that time I was arrested together with a lot of other people in an anti-war demonstration, and I was put in a cell with 65 other women for the day. That changed me as a feminist. The connection and love between these women I might never otherwise have met and myself turned out to be more important to me than the cause we were arrested for.

The Mutation Show was the end of my work with the Open Theatre. I had to make a change that would articulate my being a woman. I was disillusioned enough in the course of the *Mutation Show* struggle to think that the theatre was not really "it" for me. I realized that the struggle for a woman in a sexist world is so vast that wherever I worked the struggle would be enormous. Until then I had somehow thought that I was "equal" with the men in the company even though I knew the outside world did not think so. But when it came to struggles about women, the men could no longer see the issues as political; suddenly it was all very personal. I realized that I would have to go through a very major struggle to do what I wanted, to express myself, to be effective in the world, and I had to figure out whether the theatre—as I knew it—was the right arena for me. Actually, even though I left the theatre world in New York—permanently, as I thought—I was engaged in creating a new kind of theatre within a few month's time. I was teaching at Bard College, and by the second semester, I was teaching a course for women which turned into a women's theatre group called The Women's Unit. That's where I started to explore my present work.

But back then, what turned me off the theatre was a profound sense of loss of identity. The Open Theatre was becoming very public, but my participation in it was deliberately and continuously ignored. The company seemed outraged at first, and all that, at the sexism of the outside world, but internal struggles soon made it clear that there was a lot of it inside as well. Some of it was gross, some more subtle. An example of the more subtle but continuous kind: *The New York Times* was supposed to come and do a story on the theatre. I had an appointment that day. The *Times* people had not shown up by the time I had to leave. That night I got a call from Joe Chaikin: "Funny thing, not five minutes after you left the *Times* crew came." The result: pictures in the *Times* of Joe Chaikin, *the* director, and the company. No mention of any co-director or of my name. Nobody thought of saying "You can't take pictures now. You'll have to come back tomorrow because Roberta Sklar is not here." That kind of thing was constant. I finally understood this, in spite of the endless denial inside the company, in the context of feminism—the same way I realized that *The Mutation Show* was not about the U.S. and Indonesia but about the people in the room.

I started to feel that what I had brought to bear to this work had been completely absorbed without acknowledgment. I needed to do something to hold on to my own reality. I turned inside, to the women's community. There was support there, recognition of the reality I was experiencing. There was something astounding about the experience of having been interviewed several times for many hours by people from major publications, and then, when the article comes out, the theatre is talked about, but your name is missing. Margaret Croyden once interviewed me for half a day for the *New York Times*, and then wrote a six-column article and never mentioned my name in it. The shock to my identity was very great. Being distorted in the press is a common experience, but after awhile I realized that the theatre itself was also responsible. I finally gave up the false idea that the world out there was bad but my co-workers were for and with me. Years later, John Stoltenberg, who was administrator of the Open Theatre when I left, wrote me a letter apologizing for his lack of consciousness at the time, speaking about his own sexism and that of the company, and of his past inability to understand what the argument was about.

Anyhow, I needed to go away. I felt deeply disappointed. The men, whom I cared a great deal about, were so twisted by sexist standards that no matter what they wanted for the Southeast Asians and the Brazilians, they couldn't understand that it had to be applied to the women who were right next to them. All of us who worked in political groups came up against that. I needed a period of separation. I needed a time to make no compromises, to hide no feelings. It was hard to leave the Open Theatre, but I crossed the bridge. Now I had to find some new way of working. Another part of my life took over: the advancement of a deep connection with women. My close friends and I did two things together at that time: We took care of a dying woman, and we started to raise a child. This was a period where a different form of creating occurred, a very vital and personal one. On the one hand, there were life circumstances to respond to—my mother's illness—and, on the other hand, a deep connection among a group of women made it possible for us to choose to raise a child together. We knew we were fully committed; now it was a question of finding out what that commitment would entail from day to day. These realities, creating a structure, a new kind of family structure for a dying woman to be taken care of and for a child to be nurtured in, were in a deep way involved in creating the next stage of my life and work. Struggling out the sexist power struggle with two or three men in an alternative theatre group or any other institution like that would have been meaningless compared to these realities.

Teaching at Bard gave me free space for a while and a kind of healing experience with a group of young women that was the beginning of a whole new stage of my work. I was able to teach an all-women's course because theatre departments are traditionally "overburdened" with too many women students. The all-women's course seemed, to the department, a way of dealing with that imbalance. This particular group of bright, enthusiastic young women who were taking the course struck me as special. Later, I realized that they really were—one indication being that they were interested in taking an all-women's theatre course at the time! To me, it was an infusion of energy, freshness, challenge and exploration. Of course, they soon had to deal with hostility coming from all sorts of sources on campus.

After one semester the students decided to lobby for the continuation of the course. I decided to stay out of the political struggle except to tell them that I was willing and available to go on. They lobbied and won. We became The Women's Unit and started explorations which led to the development of the play *Obscenities and Other Questions*. What we were most interested in were questions about the distinct acting problems women have. We had no idea what would apply of the traditional techniques. I was starting from scratch because I was going on the assumption that everything I knew was generated by male traditions, and so I had to start from what I did *not* know.

The traditional approach to acting—stripping away layers, breaking down defenses, and building up from nothing—didn't seem to apply to women. You don't break down a woman's defenses. She has learned to survive by developing defenses in a world that doesn't perceive her as a part of the human race. There is value in discovering what her defensive behavior is, finding out which parts still serve her, and which parts no longer do so, even though they have been there over the years. We know about that now as feminists, from consciousness-raising and from psychotherapy, but in the early 70s we really didn't know that much about it. So, instead of tearing down, we located, supported, and built up strengths: literal strength and psychic strength. We worked with feelings. We knew that women, unlike men, have little trouble knowing what they feel or *that* they feel. Women are too often flooded with feelings. We had to learn to shape, control and consciously project our feelings.

This was the first opportunity I had to really question the methods I had been working with for a long time. It happened at a time when women's alternatives were springing up all over the place, in every area. There was a kind of innocence about all of us at Bard. We had never thought about these things before, we had never heard how somebody else did it, and we were not trying to package it right away, either. We were really trying to discover something for ourselves. We began to develop material for a play as well as a method, the beginnings of a method. We took what I knew about methods and questioned it. The content, the material for the play, grew out of an ongoing consciousness-raising group we had in which we told our stories. I was interested in developing a theatre, a method and a theory. How do you act as a performer and a person when you have been taught not to ACT, not to do, not to take action? The performer is taking an action. The study of acting is an analysis of human behavior and a projection of that analysis. Once I realized that, I knew that I had to rediscover or reanalyze even the things I had been part of inventing at the Open Theatre, because those inventions were made from a male-identified perspective. Now I needed other voices.

It was in 1971 that I first saw the It's Alright to be a Woman Theatre perform at a woman's conference [T54]. It was the first time I had seen women's theatre, and I was shocked. It was theatrically naive, but it was completely relevant to the audience from beginning to end! It addressed a real need that existed in the audience. The themes were basic: the burdens of motherhood, feelings about our bodies, body hair, menstruation. Now we've all thought about these things, but then, the depth of the experience was not so much in the theatrical rendering but in the phenomenon of women performing exclusively for women about themes that were exclusively women's experiences. The audience was the partner. This was supposed to be true in political theatre in general, but here the presumption of sameness between the audience and the performers was actually justified! We knew each other to the extent to which we knew ourselves—and we were just beginning to get to know ourselves.

We must acknowledge this group, the It's Alright to be a Woman Theatre, which did not grow out of the theatre community so much as out of the women's community, as the founders of modern feminist theatre. I understood through them that consciousness-raising and the thunderclap of recognition *can* occur through the theatre.

I was not drawn to the particular theatrical forms, but to the phenomenon of the audience and the performers really knowing each other, to the shared consciousness. I came to understand that being a woman encompasses every part of me, and I wanted to do theatre that was about that. I didn't know yet how to do that, or that I wanted to stop doing what I had been doing, but something had started.

In 1973, when I was working with the Womanrite Theatre Ensemble, whose members were "just women" rather than actors, I realized that a woman who had only six months earlier left her husband in the suburbs *can* belong on the stage rather than in the audience, as I had previously supposed. I had come to suspect, given the experience with the Women's Unit at Bard, that my previous ideas about who belongs on stage and who belongs in the audience were not necessarily correct. I knew that it requires skill to theatrically analyze human behavior and to project your analysis, but more than anything else it requires interest. I watched what these women in Womanrite knew about theatre, and although it was relatively little, we built on that. I stayed with them for three years and moved from teaching into the more active participation of directing the work.

Is this the time when you first started to work with Sondra Segal?

Yes. What struck me right away was Segal's response to improvisations: extraordinary and electrifying interest. She was very fascinated by a kind of consciousness and control. An example: We did an improvisation in which the object was to recall a violent fantasy using a vocally even tone, but recalling it fully in detail. The electricity that surrounded her as she spoke was amazing. Clearly, the

Sondra Segal in *The Cinderella Project*

tension between the highly activated feeling-state women are often in and the state of restraint applied to it—not restraint because you must but because you are shaping and controlling what you present—was the acting task. For me, this was the first time that I had the chance to work with a woman with great acting potential who was feminist in her thinking. Segal and I began to work together in different ways, including teaching acting classes together. We were really raising the question, "What is feminist acting?" Until then, the question had been "What would be relevant for women?" Now there was the possibility that there could be a *feminist* acting method, a feminist analysis of human behavior, and not only a projection of that analysis, but also a model for change. We formulated exercises that expressed questions about the focus in a woman's consciousness. We explored states of mind particular to women. We worked on creating, dynamically, in the room, with 10 or 12 participants, a state of mind: a series of movements, sounds and possible interactions, whose gestalt communicated this state.

Segal as Electra, stepping out of family

We were also working on shaping emotion. We know that women traffic in emotions, it is our currency, but what is it to be in an "emotional state" all the time? We started to used several people to project an emotion rather than a single individual. Our minds are so socialized in a patriarchal world that our own stream of consciousness speaks for HIM half the time. This work was all about noticing the moment when a woman's mind is speaking for herself and exploring it.

My own probing of the question "What is feminist acting?" is being more fully explored by Segal as a central performer in the Women's Experimental Theatre. She is an advanced feminist actor, perhaps the first. The particular way in which she addresses the women in an audience—with compassion, with transformation as a demonstration and a call to change, with a woman-centered focus—makes each performance a feminist encounter. We have worked together (as director/actor, as well as co-directors and writers) since 1973, through four new works. In the first, *The Cinderella Project*, the central image she projected was that of a sexually conscious woman competing for her own survival. And survival is a theme which has run through the more expansive roles she has developed within *The Daughters Cycle*. Here each single role is a multiple role: Mother/Daughter, Sister-Child/Adult, and finally Electra/Clytemnestra. Through her feminist consciousness, she creates a theatrical persona which allows for changeability, for transformation, for the multiplicity, the constant switching of roles that is woman's experience. Her performance continually challenges my own assumptions about women's roles, in and out of the theatrical space, and stirs my own formulation of a feminist theatre esthetic.

The Daughters Cycle*, part 3 of *Electra Speaks

The early work we did with acting students was important because it helped us in trying to develop a feminist esthetic and a method for the theatre. Consciousness, social restrictions, sense of self were not touched for women in traditional acting techniques; the approach to emotional life is all off because of men's understanding of it and attitude towards it. The approach to physical life is off because it is based on stereotypes of what women look like: for example, either the sexy beauty or the frowsy mommy. They don't see a human body or the vast range of what a woman's physical experience is. Even in the avant-garde theatre, they were full of stereotypes, just new ones: the concept of the Beautiful Young Thing who didn't wear high heels and stockings. She was ethereal and ran through the woods, or was full of a "beautiful kind of energy," had very long hair, smoked grass, and made love to men and women. She didn't have any real strength, and she didn't have any real conflict (she was neurotic when she was conflicted). How women relate to men was also totally categorized. These traditions are not overtly written into the methods, but there is no place for real self-criticism. It all depends on the outside view. The tradition for women is *not* to trust their own bodies, its signals and perceptions. The task for us is clear: Women have to learn to hear their own voices, bodies, impulses, to take them and use them, rather than to assume that someone else always knows better.

For myself, from the time I left The Open Theatre to the founding of The Women's Experimental Theatre, I was learning to really hear the intelligence of the woman actor. We were all peers when it came to self-knowledge. I knew no more than anyone else, and there was no telling where the discoveries would come from. It was a rest, for me, from the world of producing products to be assessed by others. I had no contact with any of the people with whom I had been discussing the theatre for years. You have to protect the development of something really new by separatism. You can't afford influences in other directions. Facing the brand-new is hard enough in a supportive place! Now I feel less of a need to protect the work, except for the parts that always have to be protected, the research and exploration phases of a new play. You always need a period of incubation. There is no need to put a work out when you still feel too scared. I am less scared these days because some identity issues are settled: Who I am is clear to me in an institution *I* am creating. Our audience is a support group. I no longer have "to face the music" with a new play in New York. That's the first place where our audience is! What we do in a real women's theatre can in no way be assessed, judged or accepted through a traditional analysis. Anyone looking at it from a traditional perspective isn't going to see. You need a new lens. The audience of women here has been learning to see together with us. Criticism in the regular press is meaningless, our constituency is not really represented there. There is the occasional unusual reviewer, male or female, who is interested, but the women whom we perform for do not take the regular press seriously as representing them and their needs and perceptions. We understand this and it is very liberating.

Tell me something about how you work at The Women's Experimental Theatre.

I'm too immersed in the process to discuss this fully. Clare Coss, Sondra Segal and I have been involved in a collaboration for about four years. Right now we are completing and performing the last part of *The Daughters Cycle, Electra Speaks*. The range of our work together has been vast for me, and I am not really ready to analyze it. I met Clare Coss in 1974 when we were colleagues at Hunter. Coss is a writer—a poet and playwright and a psychotherapist, all of which deeply impacts on our work together. When we met I wanted to work with her, but we didn't have a context—a feminist theatre. Coss, Segal and I began a theatrical dialog in 1976 that was extraordinary because it included who we really were, not who we were emulating or who we were pretending to be. All three of us were very centered in our woman-identification. This gave an amazing clarity to our thinking. We were actually talking with each other woman to woman! This led to our founding of The Women's Experimental Theatre and to our collaboration on the trilogy, a study of women's relationships within the family. We wanted to establish a theatre that would continue these explorations, a theatre for women, about women and by women. A place to work.

The three of us collaborate. We work together and separately. There are several stages in the creation of a new play. First, there is the period of research during which we've worked with hundreds of women in workshops and interviews. Then we spend some time doing an inventory of what's there; then we formulate the play together. After this we start digging in, writing separately, exchanging ideas and material in a cross-dialog in which the play gets written in rough-draft form. Then we have a period of workshops and rehearsing, and we continue writing and cross-dialoging. We playwrite together, but we take more specific roles at different points along the way.

In the research period, for example, we are all actors. We all participate in the workshops, all put forth ideas and images. Segal and I direct at this point. Actually, Segal does more of the directing here, inventing exercises and so on. I get more involved in creating material, generating it as an actor. Coss also enters the actor research in a very active way and writes throughout the whole process in forms of dialog and poetry that embrace the themes of the trilogy but also extend beyond the parameters of the plays. But all three of us raise the issues that the play is concerned with in conference with each other. Segal and I are more concerned with defining how to explore the issues we have decided on in terms of acting exercises. All three of us are writing material from beginning to end; there is no pattern to this. Then, during the inventory period, the play gets structured and thematic and material choices are made by all three of us together in collaboration.

Once the play is written in rough-draft form, I concentrate on directing, Segal steps into the acting, and Coss and I step back to see what we have and what's missing. Up to this point we have all been doing what we call "inspired writing," but now we realize, say, that we need a scene with specific parameters. Coss is brilliant at this: She is a writer, she goes home and writes it. When you come to a performance, you see Segal out on stage performing, together with Mary Lum and Mary Lyon, the two other actors who have worked with us throughout the trilogy (other actors perform in only one or two of the plays); you see Clare and me sitting in the audience taking notes. The three of us are assessing the play from our own perspective. At this stage, my work as a director is primary, but our interweave continues. We collaborate throughout in a very deep sense, but we have also learned to name what we do individually, to claim our work.

***Cornelia Brunner** is a research psychologist specializing in esthetics, media and creativity.*

Joan Holden and the San Francisco Mime Troupe

by Ruby Cohn

At 10:00 a.m. a red metrovan truck rolls up to a Bay Area park. Along its side white letters blare "San Francisco Mime Troupe." Within a few minutes two old cars park near the truck, and 10 people alight from the vehicles. They confer swiftly before unburdening the truck of collapsible platform, costume rack and prop boxes on wheels. One of the people points to the sky, designating the path of the afternoon sun; the stage must be positioned with the sun behind the audience. Practiced hands then set the small platform on jacks, elevate the stage frame with its narrow curtain, and underpin the whole. Casual conversation punctuates the hard physical labor. By noon the small performance space is ready, and the Mime Troupe actors select their several costumes for the afternoon's play. Four actor-musicians bring instruments, but no musical scores, to collapsible seats at the left of the stage. They tune up, and veteran spectators arrive gradually, some spreading blankets for a picnic as they listen to rehearsal of the play's songs. By 1:30 p.m. a crowd fans out from the small stage, and the director gives the actors notes about the last performance. At 2:00 the band plays a resonant flourish, parents gather wandering children, lovers nestle against one another and spectators look to the stage, the sun well behind them. The curtain parts, and the performance starts—of a play probably written by Joan Holden.

But it was not always so. The San Francisco Mime Troupe began in 1959 as the R. G. Davis Mime Studio and Troupe, since Ronny Davis had trained as a mime. Joan Holden first saw the Troupe in 1961, at the urging of her ex-husband, Arthur Holden. By 1963 R. G. Davis renamed his unstable group the San Francisco Mime Troupe; few productions were actually mime, alternating as they did between satire in a modified commedia dell'arte style and experimental events.

In 1967 Davis cut the Mime Troupe from 59 to 14 loosely affiliated members. It was Davis who chose the material to perform, inveigled writers to shape it and persuaded actors to flesh it out. After playing anti-war skits, he wanted a more sustained drama against the Vietnam War and selected Goldoni's *L'amante militare*. No playwright was available, so actor Arthur Holden volunteered his wife Joan, who had been an English major at college. Knowing no Italian, Joan Holden based her adaptation on a literal translation (by Betty Schwimmer, another Mime Troupe wife), on the Troupe's familiar commedia style with its modern racial stereotypes and on actors at hand. From the first reading of her script, Holden knew that she wanted to be a playwright.

In the 18th century Goldoni revived the moribund commedia tradition; in the 20th century the Mime Troupe revived Goldoni for performance in the parks. Goldoni's plot episodically treats the army lover of the title; a Spanish lieutenant, Alonso, courts the Italian Pantalone's daughter during the Italo-Spanish wars. Goldoni's nation-crossed lovers are finally united, as are their servants, Corallina and Arlecchino, but another *amante militare* rejects his mistress to pursue his military career. Although Goldoni's Alonso resigns his commission for his Rosaura, he closes the play with ringing rhetoric about love inspiring valor.

Holden underlines the waste of war. She eliminates the parted lovers, converts Pantalone to a (Jewish) capitalist, blends three Goldoni characters into General Garcia, and introduces a black soldier, Espada. As in Goldoni, women are against a war that deprives them of lovers, but only Holden has the General declare: "The fundamental policy of the Spanish government is to pursue peace with every available weapon." Clever Brighella and stupid Arlecchino behave traditionally, but at the suggestion of Davis, Holden adds English Punch, who explicitly relates Goldoni's plot to the Vietnam War. New *lazzi* complement those of Goldoni; for example, when Pantalone excuses a slip of his tongue, he slips a tongue from his mouth into the General's hand. Holden's most radical change is a completely new denouement: servant Corallina disguises herself as the Pope, who arbitrarily declares peace, matches Alonso with his beloved, assigns socialist Brighella to keep capitalist Pantalone's accounts, sends Espada home, and claims Arlecchino for him/herself. Finally, Pope Corallina turns to the audience: "Listen, my friends—you want something done? Well then, do it yourselves!"

Goldoni's play is a loose concatenation of incidents, and so is Holden's, in harmony with the style of R. G. Davis. *L'amant militaire* galvanized park audiences to the Troupe, as never before, with nearly 50 performances.

Although Holden didn't know it then, *L'amant militaire* was prophetic of what became her staple genre (as well as that of the Troupe)—political formula comedy. Shortly after adapting Goldoni's play, she would write: "Comedy, which in its basic action always measures an unsatisfactory reality against its corresponding ideal, may be the revolutionary art form par excellence." It certainly became Holden's art form par excellence, pitting satirized establishment figures of unsatisfactory reality against an ideal of working-class harmony and celebration, the whole cast in a familiar popular formula.

SAN FRANCISCO MIME TROUPE

L'amante militaire

In 1970 the San Francisco Mime Troupe regrouped as a collective, with Joan Holden, an independent female, one of its dozen members. Her play, *The Independent Female*, was started in the old Mime Troupe, but it came to express the spirit of the new. After the departure of the Mime Troupe's male founder-director, female Troupers experienced a new feeling of independence, which Holden translated to the stage. Unlike her two plays under Davis, *The Independent Female* was not an adaptation. She replaced commedia characters with those of soap opera, and she assigned comic telltale names—Pennybank for a business tycoon, Heartright for a junior executive, Bullitt for a militant feminist.

A pair of lovers is faced with an obstacle to their marriage—the young woman's nascent self-awareness. Instead of removing the obstacle for a happy curtain clinch, however, Holden substitutes a subversive ending to this formulaic plot. The ingenue, a closet independent, declares herself publicly when the leader of the women's movement is shot: "My epitaph: 'Shot in her back for refusing to live on it.'" Spurning her lover, the newly independent female joins the women's liberation movement. At the end of the play a barker underlines a new morality, wooing the audience to respond in chorus. Pointing to the now independent female, he asks: "Will headstrong youth's impetuous course be halted?" Pointing to the sexist romantic male, he asks: "Will manhood recover its pride?" Pointing to the tycoon who collapsed at the women's rebellion, he asks: "Will responsible leadership withstand this assault?" With a triple negative, the audience is asked to link the feminist revolt to class revolt: "Or does the implacable rebellious spirit of *independent females* portend this society's ultimate collapse?"

The Independent Female

The independent Female is Holden's most popular play, written in specific circumstances but widely applicable and applied outside the Mime Troupe. Later that same year—1970—Holden composed *Seize the Time*, a documentary presentation of Black Panther Bobby Seale's Chicago trial.

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The Dragon Lady's Revenge of 1971 tried a new formula, the comic strip, with assists from Grade "B" movies. Sparked by a *Ramparts* article on CIA involvement in Vietnam drug traffic, the complicated story was plotted by five Troupers and written by three, mainly Holden. As *The Independent Female* subverts the form of soap opera, *The Dragon Lady's Revenge* subverts the jingoistic fervor of *Terry and the Pirates*. The plot is intricate, involving a corrupt ambassador in Long Penh, his soldier son Clyde, a CIA agent Drooley, and the titular Dragon Lady who runs a drug racket at the White Monkey Bar, one of the enterprises of a mysterious Mr. Big. The Ambassador explains American presence in Long Penh: "Basically, we are here because we desperately want to get out." In a spy-movie parody, General Rong Q and agent Drooley oppose one another in a fencing gym, while fair Blossom as fencing teacher spies on them, and soldier Clyde on her.

In this exotic conspiracy Drooley, the CIA agent, mercurially disguises himself as priest, fakir, Jesus freak, fencer and nun. When the Dragon Lady is about to kill General Rong Q over drug profits, the latter reveals that the Ambassador is an old lover who abandoned her years ago in Singapore, as in Von Sternberg's *Lady from Shanghai*. In the last scene everybody comes to the White Monkey Bar with murder in heart and syringe. Rong Q dies at Drooley's hands, who in turn dies at the hands of Mr. Big, who in turn is unmasked as the Ambassador, who stabs the Dragon Lady with the fatal syringe. Clyde refuses his father's request to turn against fair Blossom. Victorious, she will exhibit the defanged Ambassador through the villages of Long Penh. The conspiracy crumbles into the promise of a people's victory; that is the Dragon Lady's revenge.

Holden's next play shifted from global to local politics, revising *High Rises*, a collective script. With fellow Trouper Steve Friedman, Holden based *San Fran Scandals of 1973* on that popular American form, musical comedy. Frank and Stella, vaudeville has-beens, are about to be evicted so that their building can be replaced by a cultural complex. The real estate villain is millionaire Smellybucks, who does not appreciate his singing secretary but fawns upon opera stars like Carlotta Snotta. Mistaking Stella for Carlotta, Smellybucks inadvertently gives a profitable contract to the old vaudeville singer and then is forced to sign a pledge to spare the old building. In a musical denouement his secretary turns out to be the long-lost daughter of the vaudeville couple.

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The following year—1974—the Mime Troupe returned to larger issues and fell on its collective face with *The Great Air Robbery*. The rambling plot is even more intricate than *The Dragon Lady's Revenge*, and it is unredeemed by scenes familiar from films and cartoons. The play began as a children's show, a science fiction detective story about fascist theft of the air we breathe. In the much revised adult version, Ray Von (pronounced Raven) is a black detective hired by a white scientist, Vi, to protect her, and then hired more profitably by Hugh Magnum to trail her. Nevertheless, Vi is strangled, and, salivating for her invention are her hippie son Nova, her radial friend Rose Truitt and Magnum himself. While they search, Martians invade the earth and air is sold selectively. In Vi's apartment Ray discovers that her coveted invention is solar energy emanating from her plants. When Ray and Rose cooperate, Magnum threatens them but is overpowered by Nova. With radicals on TV announcing that the Martian invasion is a hoax, Ray Von on stage concludes the play inconclusively: "That closed the case—except for how we're gonna get out of here alive." Holden drew her own conclusion from the play's failure to hold audiences:

> *"The adult version was begun. . . by two writers with different views of the story, rewritten by one writer who could not refrain from constant consultation with the director (whose apprentice was the other writer), produced because we had nothing else, opened prematurely, performed through a dozen revisions, and finally toured against everybody's better judgment."* (Theatre Quarterly #18)

Audience applause is Holden's one stern test for scripts.

Committed to social change, the San Francisco Mime Troupe was formed by white middle-class actors. However, *The Great Air Robbery* traces (shakily) the educating adventures of a black detective, and *Frijoles* of the following year—1975—traces (clearly) the educating adventures of a Third World and a North American couple. *Frijoles* is Spanish for beans, and this is the main South American crop until United States monopolies impose cultivation of bananas for export. The Latino couple enclose a note in a banana shipment, which is discovered by an unemployed United States couple. An international food conference in Rome is dominated by profit-seeking Butz and Kissinger. The United States couple attend by winning a free trip, and the Latino couple by stowing away with bananas. Hungry, both couples denounce the food conference, recognize their common interests, and triumphantly feast on beans.

Frijoles

As *Frijoles* travels through space, *Power Play* travels through time. The play is set in a post-nuclear future, with the earth laid waste and few humans left alive. A scientist has invented a time machine to carry him to a pre-nuclear past, but, dying before he can make the journey, he bequeaths the machine to Tlapalli, a blend of native American and Chicana.

Tlapalli first travels to 1913, when the California Hetch Hetchy Dam was conceived, spoiling a lovely wilderness in order to supply water to the city of San Francisco for the profit of robber baron Greedley. Tlapalli's next stop is 1925, when the dam is a monopoly of the Pacific Gas and Electric Company. By 1976, Tlapalli's third stop, Greedley's son controls a multitude of corporations and convinces San Francisco's mayor to support a nuclear plant at the dam. Unmasked by Tlapalli, the two scoundrels intend to rape her, but are discovered by conservationist Alice Blythe, who has lived through Tlapalli's three time-stops. A mad scientist, afflicted with radioactivity, joins them, and, fearing contamination, Greedley plunges out the window to his death. Since the fight against nuclear plants is not yet won, Tlapalli remains in the present, sending the afflicted scientist in the time machine on a voyage back to the Big Bang. Tlapalli asks the present audience to fight all forms of nuclear waste.

By 1976, the Bicentennial year, the San Francisco Mime Troupe was in firm command of its idiom: small stage and large gesture, simple language and clean story line, swift scenes and functional costumes. Many of the actors could play musical instruments; most were able to juggle; each had a witty line of socially telling patter to coax contributions from crowds in the parks—contributions that supported the Troupe, which received its first city grant only in 1977.

Ted Shank has summarized cogently:

> *The unique style of the San Francisco Mime Troupe plays has come about primarily for two reasons: the need to find a style which carries outdoors in the parks and the attempt to find popular entertainment techniques which appeal to their heterogeneous audiences. They have borrowed techniques from commedia dell'arte, vaudeville, spy movies, comic strips, cartoons, musical comedy, and western movies; and nearly all of the members of the group can play instruments in their band, dance, sing, and juggle. (Theatre Quarterly #27)*

More astonishing, perhaps, is that out of this medley the Troupe has forged a wholly coherent style, grounded in scripts of Joan Holden. In contrast to many groups of the 1960s and 1970s, their stylized comic acting thrives on linear narration which displays characters with clear responses to the class struggle.

The Troupe wished to celebrate the Bicentennial year with a play on underground American history—the role of labor, women, minorities. Although the 17 members read avidly, it was hard to agree on what to dramatize. When Holden proposed the subject of a multiracial mining town on strike during the Spanish-American War, actual dramatization was hard. With a European tour booked, Holden produced the company's longest and most ambitious script, *False Promises/Nos Engañaron*. J. P. Morgan, Teddy Roosevelt and their minions are drawn with the broad brush that Holden used for satire from Pantalone of *L'amant militaire* to Greedley of *Power Play*. New to her, however, was the heightened realism of the working-class characters in all their strength and frailty. Departing from cartoons, Holden was helped by actors' hints and by the Gorky/Brecht *Mother* which the Troupe toured in 1973-74.

False Promises contrasts ruling and working-class characters, but within the working class there is further contrast between a naive black soldier, Washington Jefferson, a socialist miner, Casey, and a self-seeking miner, Harry Potter. Prevented from voting, Washington Jefferson is persuaded by Teddy Roosevelt to join the army, where he fights in Cuba and Puerto Rico, only to learn that Americans are not welcome there. He arrives in Copper City, Colorado, where the play's main action takes place.

In that city mine owners keep lowering workers' wages, encouraging strife between Mexican and Anglo miners. When the miners strike, wives and saloon singers are solidly behind them. As the strike continues, however, with its privations, Harry Potter (who has married a singer from the saloon of black Montana) returns to work, and the miners' unity collapses. At this point Washington Jefferson arrives with orders to end the strike. He reports that Casey has been hanged. But the play's ending was a problem—and remained one through several performed versions.

Adept at celebratory finales blending racial with class unity, Holden has grown self-critical about her conclusions. The dramatic problem is how to be hopeful without being preachy. Sermons don't attract people in the parks, but festive rejoicing may drown out the call to action.

Joan Holden believes that 1976 marked a decisive change in her dramaturgy. For the first time she taught playwriting (at University of California, Davis), and she reread Aristotle and came to appreciate his insistence on the primacy and drive of plot. Through her work on *False Promises* she was drawn to more realistic characters. Thus, the contrast is evident between her two plays treating a similar problem, *San Fran Scandals of 1973* (a collaboration) and *Hotel Universe* of 1977. In both plays inexpensive housing is threatened by ruthless investors. In the earlier play the victims are a vaudeville couple, whose plight fuses into a satire against the evil Mr. Smellybucks. In *Hotel Universe* the victims are the diverse and quirky inhabitants of a hotel—Manuel, the Chicano baseball fan, Gladys, the black revivalist, Myrna, the talent scout, and Olga Danskaya, the dancer who has waited for decades for her sailor love. Unlike the earlier vaudeville couple, who triumph through accident, the Hotel Universe inhabitants organize against their landlord. When the Mayor offers them better housing, only Olga is gullible enough to accept.

By word of mouth, hand press, and indefatigable labor, the elderly tenants of Hotel Universe mobilize the whole working community to come to their aid. Their determination frightens the Mayor who pledges to save the hotel if they vote for him. Reelected, he goes back on his word, and the play ends on a sweet-sour note. Olga rejoins her comrades and recognizes in a drunken sailor her long lost love, but the police commandeer Hotel Universe. The old people are left homeless, but they turn to the audience for a final song: "We're a symbol, we're a lesson./ Folks can unite against oppression. . . / Whenever the deck is stacked,/ Fight back!" A melodic call to action is neither a sermon nor a celebration.

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Electrobucks of 1978 reverts to a triumphant ending, but the characters are again realistic. In *Power Play* Tlapalli and Alice Blythe were walking symbols against monopoly capitalism, but humanization is pervasive in *Electrobucks*, which also contains a powerful corporation. Even a factory-owner emerges from his mask. Rather than the hardline Bill Gropper-type tycoon, Holden's Mike Roebucks is a space freak who lives by the clichés of mystical chic. Through his foreman Hernandez, alias Henderson, he exploits his women factory workers, one with an emphysemic husband and the other with three children.

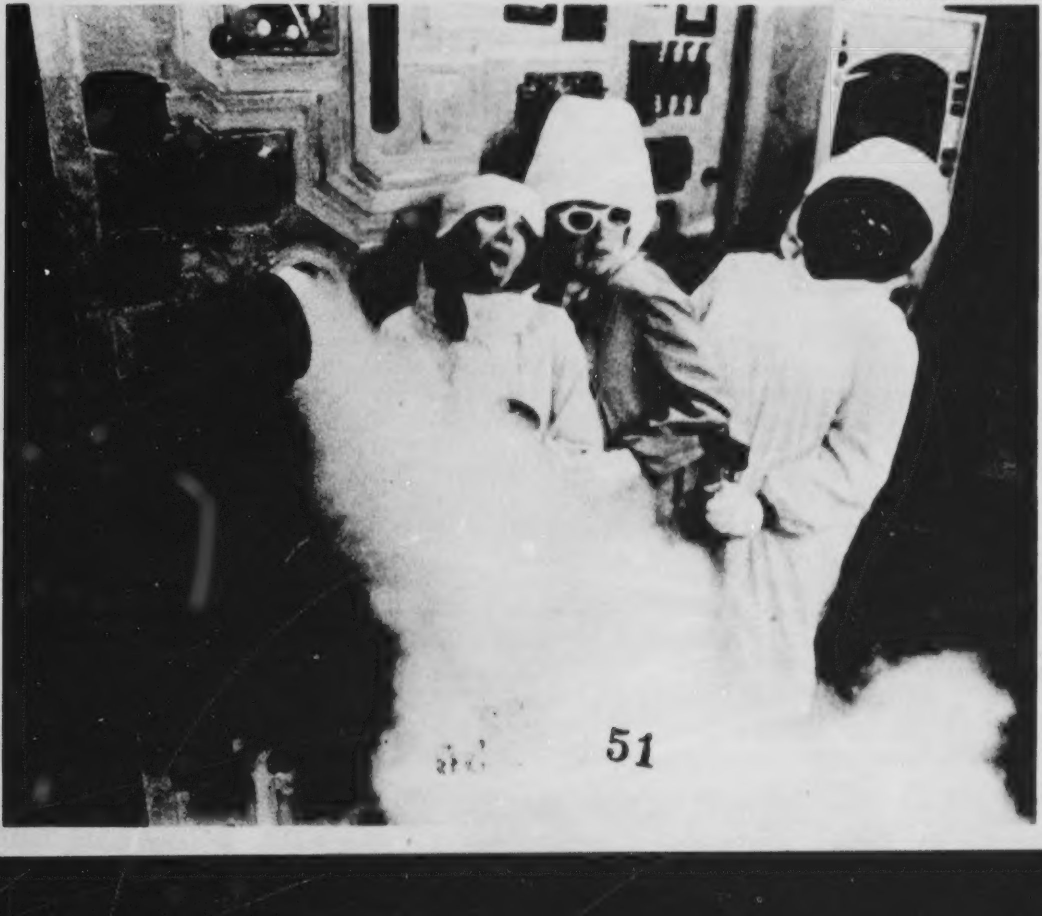
Into their midst enters the lovely Chicana Dela, who brings out the latent Latin lover in Hernandez. Rather than wallow in her own romance, however, Dela manipulates Hernandez to save her colleague's job. Three angry women confront Mike Roebucks with a demand for humane working conditions in his electrical plant. Hernandez, inspired by the ghost of his Zapatista grandfather, lures Roebucks away to an ashram, leaving the three women in power at the factory. After a decade of playwriting, Holden moves *Electrobucks* swiftly, dovetailing main plot—the sweat shop that squeezes out electrobucks for its owner—and subplot—Chicano identity in an Anglo world. Music weaves through the dialog which is an amalgam of meditation jargon, workers' slang, sci-fi double talk, Chicano Spanglish and worn-out proverbs burped from a computer.

Thoroughly attuned to the skills of her fellow Troupers, Joan Holden may set a new pattern in her recent work. Instead of scaling down its summer programs for winter touring, the San Francisco Mime Troupe has for the first time rented a theatre to present a new program in winter: Dario Fo's *We Can't Pay; We Won't Pay* and an original children's show, *TV Dinner*, with scripts emanating from Holden. Milder

Copper City
Colorado
Summer 1898

False Promises/Nos Engañaron

Electrobucks



Squash

weather will bring park performances of *Squash*, which was seeded by oil shortages of the daily headlines and neighborhood gardens of California. The scenario of *Squash* was sketched out by Trouper Dan Chumley; the dialog was scripted by Holden and Carlos Morton, and three gods were grafted from Brecht's *Good Woman of Setzuan*. The new pattern, then, may alternate between park presentations of original (largely Holden) work in summer and theatre performance of ready-made plays in winter.

And the future pattern for Joan Holden, playwright? Although she has written a play, *Loon's Rage*, for another group, it is hard to imagine her doing that again—within a 24-hour day. Between three children, much of the Mime Troupe business, rehearsals and performances, where would she find time to write for other groups? Like Brecht, Holden views her plays as *Versuche*, always subject to change in performance. Even publication of her plays in the forthcoming *By Popular Demand* will not consecrate them. The antithesis of a lonely writer dependent on inspiration, Holden visualizes particular actors speaking her lines, even though the lines may eventually fall to others. When Holden talks about her plays, she uses the word *scripting* rather than *writing*—the product of several heads but her two hands pounding out a playable draft.

***Ruby Cohn**, professor of Comparative Drama at University of California, Davis, has published widely on drama.*

Laurie Anderson:

Performance Artist

by Mel Gordon

> *I always felt it was a mistake being labeled as an autobiographical artist. [. . .] Most of the work that I do is two-part or stereo, not monolithic at all—so there's always the yes/no, he/she, or whatever pairs I'm working with.*
>
> Laurie Anderson, 1979

Since her first performance work in 1974, Laurie Anderson has found herself concerned with a basic esthetic dilemma that has troubled a number of other performance artists: how to create an intensely personal art that is not just simple autobiography. How can the performer/author bring raw, unmediated materials from his/her life and structure them to strike a balance between his/her own needs and those of the audience? For Anderson, the resolution is not only intellectual but technical; it is one that leads to a new performance style.

What Anderson calls a "system of pairing," of placing polar opposites side-by-side or before one another, of incorporating and transposing a kind of spiraling dialectic of styles and frames of reference pattern her productions like an electrical grid. Her performance methodologies revolve around a network of dualities: artist as person/character, language/sound, private/public activity, memory/fantasy, audio/visual space, male/female, nineteenth/twentieth century musical instrumentation, history/prophecy, filmic/live presentation.

Even Anderson's reception as a performance artist has a dual aspect to it. Despite the dense theatricality of her work, her support and renown seem to come almost exclusively from the art world, where she has an enthusiastic following. Although a *Life* magazine photo-essay (January 1980) described her as "a former teacher and critic, who may be the most popular performance artist," relatively few individuals in experimental theatre are aware of her work. Possibly, the difficulty in actually seeing Anderson's presentations—she normally performs only once or twice a year in New York, where she lives—and her tendency to mount her productions in art galleries and museums may also explain why she has been generally overlooked in theatre circles.

Born in 1947 and raised in northern Illinois, Laurie Anderson feels her early childhood may have had a lasting influence on her artistic thinking. One of eight children, she remembers a family ritual where everyone sat around the table telling stories about what had happened to him that day. Amidst this mob scene, she quickly learned that the simple narration of interesting experiences did not always lead to interesting stories. Reports had to be tailored in places, expanded in others, points of view sometimes had to be altered, occasionally missing details or more dramatic conclusions had to be supplied. Besides stories, family members played musical instruments, composed private songs, did voice imitations. Anderson also discovered at this time, like many tellers of yarns, that one often forgets what reportage is factual and what is invented. This sometimes leads to a certain artistic confusion or complexity. (For example, during a piece she presented at the Whitney Museum in 1976, where she related a personal story, her father was heard relating another version of it in the audience.)

During the 1960s, Anderson studied at Barnard College where she graduated with honors in art history. Later she took a master's degree at Columbia in sculpture and began teaching "Principles of Art History," which she subtitled "Skrooples," at City College in New York. Both in and out of the classroom, Anderson found herself fascinated with the perceptual contrasts of words—whether handwritten, printed, or spoken—and visual imagery. The notion of students filling notebooks in the colored light of projected slide transparencies while she lectured struck Anderson as a bizarre esthetic relationship.

It was just at this time, around 1972, that Anderson's interest in paper sculpture and in art generally began to fade. Instead, she turned to writing, a kind of conceptual writing that consisted of one-sentence books, diary entries, even a dream series that resulted from the mixing of daydreams, memories, real dreams, and paintings that were projected on the screen during an art history class.

During the summer of 1972, Anderson and a friend organized a performance event in a small Vermont town. Every Sunday evening, residents of Rochester would drive up to their park in automobiles, trucks, and motorcycles to hear music played by a local band. Without ever leaving their car seats, the spectators would sit and honk their horns to show approval at the end of each section. Enthralled by the naiveté and sophistication of the situation, Anderson managed to reverse the audience/entertainer relationship by forming an orchestra of the same vehicles. This time the people in the driver's seats made the music with their horns and spectators sat in the park's gazebo.

Laurie Anderson's first major performance piece, *As: If* was mounted at the Artists Space in Soho in 1974. Encouraged by Vito Acconci, she attempted to structurally blend different personal stories with oversized projections of words. On one side of the screen was a word concerned with language, and on the other, separated by a colon, was a word related to water. (For example, "SOUND: DROWN.") The slides were used as a subtext to both highlight and diagram the narration.

In the summers of 1974 and 1975, Anderson performed *Duets on Ice* in various outdoor locations in New York City. Standing in ice skates, whose blades were embedded in blocks of ice, she played a violin that contained a built-in speaker. Wired to a hidden tape recorder, the violin could produce prerecorded sound as well as live music. In this way, Anderson was able to perform a duet with herself.

More than a simple Dada-type escapade, *Duets on Ice* revealed a number of central features in Anderson's ethos—notably a deep concern with performance time and objects. Possibly influenced by her storytelling and teaching experiences, Anderson tries to keep the length of her performances within set limits, usually less than 60 or 75 minutes. In *Duets on Ice*, the melting of the ice regulated the performance time in an obvious, graphic fashion.

For Anderson, certain personal objects play a significant part in the production. Unlike standard stage props, these special items, or what Anderson calls "dense objects," signify a whole range of private memories or emotions, while remaining entirely functional to the piece. The ice and the skates take on personal and metaphysical expressions of time passing, of internal and outer balance, of musical and anatomical rhythms. Of all the "dense objects" in Anderson's repertoire, none is so readily associated with her as the violin. Used as an instrument, a partner, a piece of machinery, a screen, a weapon, the violin and bow (or symbolically, wood and horsehair) have undergone dozens of technical incarnations in Anderson's work. Sometimes electrified, at other times played naturally, Anderson's most innovative violin-creation has consisted of an instrument whose strings have been replaced with an audio head from a tape recorder and whose horsehair on the bow has been replaced with recording tape. This "tape-bow violin" can create a sound-speech that has never existed before. As the bow is passed across the audio bridge, a totally reversible music-language is heard: "no" on the up-bow becomes "one," on the down-bow, "yes" becomes "say." All a demonstration of the liquid nature of language.

After *Duets on Ice*, Anderson's work began to exhibit a more sophisticated blending of personal narrative and complex technology. For one thing, her sculptural sense of space became more pronounced. In an early version of *For Instants*, presented at the Whitney Museum in February 1976, a film shot from Anderson's loft window was projected against a white wall. After a few moments, she appeared in a white dress with an electric violin. Flush against the film image, looking like a kind of bulge in the two-dimensional plane of a window, she started to play her instrument, occasionally glancing back at the projection. The concert and film ended simultaneously. Anderson then lay down on the floor with a candle and read a text, which described the difficulties she had in filming, in understanding film time, in writing songs. ("It's like walking up the stairs in the dark and you think there is one more step than there actually is, and your foot comes pounding down on the top step. . . .") While she spoke, her breath caused the candle flame to move in and out of the path of a photo cell's beam, which in turn caused the electrical circuit of the spotlight to be joined and broken. Therefore, the reading's illumination was solely based on the "breathiness" of its words.

Later in 1976, Anderson prepared a new piece for the Berlin Festival, called *Engli-SH*. Knowing little German, she attempted a performance that explored the areas between the languages, emphasizing "s" (actually "z" in German) and "sh" sounds. At first, she appeared before her audience with simultaneous slide projections of German translation as she spoke. But, after a while the subtitles went out of sync, and the performance took on a new rhythm. Almost every word had a "zzz" sound in it, which became the buzzing of a fly, the noise of snoring, the resonation of bad violin playing. (Curiously enough, small sections of the audience responded by locking arms and replying with their own "zzz" sounds.) Anderson also played a violin as she ran back and forth between two microphones, merging the images of crossing language barriers and violin-playing. The staccato sounds of the violin rapidly going in and out of the microphones' range increased until they resembled the frenzied report of a machine-gun. Anderson then stopped to tell a story about carrying a violin case in Chicago. She performed her violin duet, and on an up-stroke she released the bow, which sailed to the wall, hitting a projected image of an apple, then William Tell, as other images begin to multiply.

Laurie Anderson's longest and most complex piece, *Americans On the Move*, was presented at the Carnegie Recital Hall and at The Kitchen in the spring of 1979.

Life in Los Angeles* from *Americans on the Move

Americans on the Move: Parts 1 & 2

by Laurie Anderson

(This text was compiled from Anderson's notes and a transcription made from a recording of her performance at The Kitchen in New York on April 1979.)

ANDERSON: *Facing the audience, she speaks in a sincere, presentational voice. Behind her is a crude outline of the U.S. projected on a screen.* A certain American sect has been looking at conditions of the world during the Flood. According to their calculations, during the Flood, the winds, tides, and currents were in an overall southeasterly direction. [*Purple arrows appear.*] This would then mean that in order for the Ark to have landed on Mt. Ararat it would had to have started several thousand miles to the west. [*A red arrow leaves map on right, and the projection of the arrow advances left.*] This would then locate pre-Flood history in Upstate New York, and the Garden of Eden somewhere, roughly, in Genesee County. [*Red arrow projection points on map.*]

Now in order to get from one place to another, something must move, so the question here is. . . did we move or did the Ark move? [*Red arrows move in a circular direction away from each other.*] Now no one here remembers moving, and there are no traces of Biblical history in this area, so we are led to the only available conclusion in this time warp. . . and that is : The Ark has simply not left yet.

Let's compare this situation to a familiar occurrence: You're driving alone [*hypnotically*] at night on a dark road and it's raining and you can't see where you're going. . . you took a turn back there, but you're not sure it was a right turn, but you took the turn and just kept going that way and eventually it starts to get [*She waves a violin bow like a windshield wiper. When flagged quickly enough, the bow reflects projected images like a screen.*] light and you look out and you realize you have absolutely no idea where you are. You're not even sure whether you've been driving all night over a great distance. . . or whether you only went a few feet and just forgot where you started from. So you get out at the next gas station and you say. . .

Hello excuse me can you tell me where I am?

[*In a slow, distorted voice that is electronically dropped one octave.*] You can read the signs. [*Word "rut" projected on bow-screen.*] You've been on this road before. [*Word "route."*] Do you want to go home? Do you want to go home now?

[*Normal voice.*] Hello excuse me, can you tell me where I am? [*With each "hello" an image of a waving hand is projected.*]

[*Distorted voice.*] You can read this sign language. In our country, goodbye looks just like hello. Say hello.

[*Normal voice.*] Hello, excuse me, can you tell me where I am?

[*Distorted voice.*] In our country, this is the way we say hello. It is a diagram of movement between two points. It is shorthand for you were here last night, but when I woke up in the morning you were gone. In our country, goodbye looks just like hello. Say hello.

[*Normal voice.*] Hello, excuse me, can you tell me where I am?

[*Distorted voice.*] In our country, sometimes you don't know when you've really arrived. You don't even know if you've left yet. In our country, this is the way we say hello. It is a diagram of movement between two points. It is a sweep on the dial. In our country, goodbye looks just like hello. Say hello.

[*Normal voice.*] Hello, excuse me, can you tell me where I am?

[*Distorted voice.*] In our country, we send pictures of people speaking our sign language into outer space. [*Diagram of a man and a woman from Pioneer 11 image is projected onto bow.*] We are speaking our sign language in these pictures. Do you think his arm is permanently attached in this position? [*Negative image.*] Or do you think they will read our signs? In our country, goodbye looks just like hello. Say hello. Say hello. [*Positive image again.*]

Sounds of highway traffic. Her humming merges with that sound.

[*Provocatively*] Say, you're an American aren't you? I can tell by the way you move that you're an American.

Slides of columns are projected on screen; these are synchronized with the bow movements of the violin. Sounds of water, traffic, birds, airplanes, and ship horns are heard in succession. A film of trees is projected on the slides of columns. Tree film dims.

Strumming a violin like a ukulele and entoning in a warbled, mad way like an Apache, she sing-speaks the following:

Well, I saw a lot of trees today, and they were all made of wood. They were wooden trees, and they were made entirely of wood.

Well, I came home today, and you were all on fire—your shirt was on fire, and your hair was on fire, and flames were licking all around your feet... And I did not know what to do... And then a thousand violins began to play, and I really did not know what to do then. So I just decided to go out, and walk the... dog.

Well, I went to the movies, and I saw a dog 30 feet high. And this dog was made entirely of light. And he filled up the whole screen. And his eyes were long hallways. He had those long echoing hallway eyes...

Well, I turned on the radio and I heard a song by Dolly Parton, and she was singing. [*in sarcastic, garbled voice*] "Oh! I feel so sad, I feel so bad... I left my mom and I left my dad... and I just want to go back home now... I just want to go back up to my Tennessee mountain home...." Well, you know she's not gonna go back home... I know she's not gonna go back home... and she knows she's never gonna go back there... and I just want to know who's gonna go walk *that* dog.

Well, I feel so sad, I feel so bad... but not as bad as the night I wrote this song.

[*Satirical, commercial voice.*] Close your eyes. Okay. Now imagine you're at the most wonderful party. Okay. Great people, mmm. Delicious food, mmm. Terrific music, mmm. Now open them! Oh no! I just want to go back home now. I just want to go back home and walk the dog.

Red light. Violin-ukulele is played at reduced level.

To background of electric percussion, she sing-speaks in a slightly distorted mysterious, nightclub tone.

Well, I know who you are baby. I've seen you get into that meditative state. You're the snake charmer baby... And you're also... the snake. You're a closed circuit, baby. You've got the answers in the palms of your hands.

Well, I met a blind judge, and he said, "I know who you are," and I said, "Who?" He said, "You're a closed circuit, baby." He said, "The world is divided into two kinds of things: There's luck. . . and there's the law. There's the knock-on-wood that says 'it might' and there's the long arm of the law that says 'it's right.' And it's a tricky balancing act between the two because both are equally true. Cause might makes right and anything could happen *que será será,* am I right?" It's a closed circuit. . . You've got the answers in the palms of your hands.

Well, I met a couple of hula dancers just hulaing down the street, and they were saying, "I wonder which way the tide's gonna roll in tonight?" And I said, "Hold up, hula dancers! You know the tide's gonna roll out, and then it's gonna roll right back in again. . . Cause it's a closed circuit, baby. We've got rules for that kind of thing, and you know the moon is so bright tonight."

Well, and don't think I haven't seen all those blind Arabs around. I've seen 'em around! And I've watched them charm that oil right out of the ground. Long black streams of that dark electric light. And they said, "One day the sun went down, and it went way down into the ground. And three thousand years went by. . . and we pumped it right back up again. Cause it's a closed circuit. We can change the dark into the light. . . and vice versa.

Well, I know who you are baby. I've watched you count yourself to sleep. You're the shepherd, baby. And you're also 1-2-3-4-hundred sheep. I've watched you fall asleep.

Well I was up real late last night, and I must have just dropped off to sleep. Cause I saw you were crying, baby. You were crying in your sleep. You're the snake charmer, baby. And you're also a very long snake. You're a closed circuit, baby. You've got the answers in the palms of your hands.

As she closes her hands, a tape of hands clapping and an organ is played. At the tenth clap, slides of doorways are shown. A violin is played. The word "room" and an arrow are projected on the bow-screen. The sound of an airplane motor replaces the clapping. Tape bow is spun.

She speaks in the warbled voice of a self-conscious, Midwestern lecturer.

Last year I was on a twin-engine plane coming from Milwaukee to New York City and just over New York one of the engines konked out, and we started to drop—straight down—flipping over and over. Then the other engine died and we went completely out of control. New York City started to get taller and taller. A voice came over the intercom and said,

[*In the reverberated voice of a slightly hysterical grade-school teacher.*]

Our pilot has informed us that we are about to attempt a crash landing. Please extinguish all cigarettes. Place tray tables in their upright locked position. Your captain says, Please do not panic. Your captain says, Place your heads in your hands. Captain says, Put your knees on the floor. Captain says, Put your hands on your knees. Captain says, Put your hands on your heads. Put your hands on your eyes! Heh heh, this is your captain. Have you lost your dog? We are going down. We are all going down together.

[*Again to the male voice of the middle-class Midwesterner.*]

As it turned out we were caught in a downdraft and rammed into a bank. It was, in short, a miracle. But afterwards, I was terrified of getting onto planes, and for months, the minute I started walking down that aisle, my eyes would clamp shut. . . and I would fall into a deep involuntary sleep. My mind would shut down. You don't want to see this. You don't want to be here. Have you lost your dog?

Finally, I was able to remain conscious but I always had to go to the forward cabin and ask one of the stewardesses if I could sit next to them. "Hi! Mind if I join you?" They were always rather irritated. "Oh all right what a baby." And I watched their uniforms crack as we made nervous chit chat. Sometimes even this didn't help and I'd have to find one of the other passengers to talk to. You can spot these people immediately. There's one on every flight. Someone who's really on *your* wavelength. I was on a flight from L.A. when I spotted one of them sitting across the aisle—a girl about 14. And she had a stuffed rabbit set up on her tray table and she kept arranging and rearranging the rabbit and kind of waving to it. Hi! Hi there! And I decided, this is the one I want to sit next to. So I sat down and we started to talk and suddenly I realized she was speaking an entirely different language—computerese—a kind of a high tech lingo. It was amazing—if she didn't understand something, it just didn't scan. Everything was circuitry, electronics, switching. We talked mostly about her boyfriend. He was never in a bad mood—he was in a bad mode-modey kind of a gut. The romance was apparently kind of rocky, and she kept saying, "Man oh man, you know, like oh man it's so digital!" She just meant the relationship was on again. . . off again. . . always two things switching—current runs through. . . and then it doesn't. . . It was a language of sounds. . . of signals. . . of switching. . . it was the language of the rabbit. . . of the caribou—the penguin—the beaver. . . it was a language of the past—current runs through bodies. . . and then it doesn't on again off again always two things switching. One thing instantly replaces another—it was a language of the future. [*Busy signal begins. Speaks slowly.*] Put your knees up to your chins. Have you lost your dog? Put your hands over your eyes. Jump out of the plane. There is no pilot. You are not alone. This is the language of the on-again, off-again future, and it is digital.

Sound of a phone ringing. Slide is projected, "We are tapping your line."

[*Normal voice.*] I answered the phone, and I heard a voice and the voice said, "Please do not hang up. We know who you are. Please do not hang up. We know what you have to say. Please do not hang up. We know who you are. Please do not hang up. We know what you want. We know what you have to say. Please do not hang up."

Rock baroque-like instrumental music is played by the band. A crude hand-drawn cartoon of a baby and a cowboy fighting is shown.

Lights are brought up on a Male and Female Reader. Anderson plays violin with the band behind them. Music is heard during the scene.

FEMALE READER: In our country, you're free and so you're born and so they say, "You're free." So—Happy Birthday! And even if you were born to lose—even if you were a complete wreck when you were born, you might still grow up to be President.

MALE READER: Today, you might be an average citizen, a civilian, a pedestrian in the street, but tomorrow you might get elected to some high office, or suddenly sell your novel and become famous overnight. Or, you could get run over by a truck and your picture could get in the paper that way. Because you're free and anything might happen. So, Happy Birthday.

FEMALE READER: I know you, totally free and already born, and holding the bag.

MALE READER: Gee, all those lights and all those screens. The New York Experience is mind-boggling. I don't think I've ever seen that many screens, and I'll probably come again. It was really amazing. It boggled the mind.

FEMALE READER: Yeah, so much going on all at once. Really, amazing. And you know, mind-boggling, too. You're walking, and you don't always realize it, but you're always falling at the same time. With each step you fall forward and then catch yourself from falling. You're falling and then catching yourself falling. And that's how you can be walking and falling at the same time.

MALE READER: Look, over there. It's a dog and it's really talking. I wanted you, and I was looking for you, but I couldn't find you. I wanted you. And I was looking for you all day, but I couldn't find you. I couldn't find you.

FEMALE READER: No one has ever looked at me like this before. No one has ever stared at me like this before. This is the first time anyone has ever looked at me like this, stared at me like this for so long, for such a long time.

MALE READER: He didn't know what to do so he just watched the government. And he saw what the government was doing, and then he just kind of scaled it down to size and ran his life that way.

FEMALE READER: Well, let's just take this microphone out into the street. Sir?

MALE READER: Huh?

FEMALE READER: You certainly look like a man of few words to me. You certainly look like a man who knows what he wants to me. You certainly look like a man who knows his own mind to me.

MALE READER: Well, I paid my money, and, somehow, I just don't think this is what, you know, what I paid my money for. I mean, I paid my money, and I just . . . I just don't think this is what I . . . what I paid my money for.

Slide of a woman with her palms upward is seen as lights lower.

FEMALE READER: Well, I'd take a wild guess, and I'd say this is a picture of a woman who just doesn't care. I mean, it's all the same to her. Or well, she could be French. No. She seems not to care . . . It's all the same to her. She could be thinking it might rain.

MALE READER: She could be out on the golf course in the summer, and suddenly the sky gets dark purple. [*Purple slide.*] And it starts to rain . . . all over again. One day it rains . . . and then the next day it doesn't, and then the day after that it doesn't rain again, and then the next day it rains again. And then it doesn't rain again.

FEMALE READER: This is the time. And this is the record of the time. [*Slides of alternate clocks appear.*] This is the time. And this is the record of the time. This is the time. [*Purple slide.*]

The two readers repeat various sections in rapid Donald Duck whisper. Circular arrows alternate at last verse.

Anderson returns to stage center with a violin, which she plays while speaking.

ANDERSON: When I was in L.A., I went to some services run by an organization called the Universalist World Church. These were held in a large auditorium, formerly a used-car showroom. They were run by two people. One's name was Dr. Jay. He was an Egyptologist and a preacher. And he also made a whole series of cassettes that he sold at the back of the church. With titles like, "UFOs and the Creatures that Drive Them." He'd start the service the same way. He'd say, "Do you want to get out of jail?" The whole congregation would say, "Yeah, we want to get out of jail?" The whole congregation would say, "Yeah, we want to get out of jail!" He'd say, "How much do you want to get out of jail? [*Her voice and violin playing become frenzied, speeded up.*] "How much? How much do you want to get out of jail?" And he'd say, "You know, getting out of jail is expensive. So we're going to pass this hat here. So, dig way down, way down in your pockets." [*In a soft voice.*] And more people lost their life savings at these services.

The other person who ran this organization was called Miss V. Her main job was administrating the oil of youth at the healing horn. The healing horn was a kind of horn of unidentifiable origin. You step up to the altar. Put your hand on the horn and start to feel a surge of energy. As long as you happen to be standing on this metal plate that's implanted in the altar.

One of the most spectacular parts of this organization was the Christmas service. And they had a whole screen with all the animals of the Nativity painted on it. And a hole cut in the screen where each animal's head should have been. And a microphone behind each hole. And Miss V. would get behind the screen and stick her head in each hole. And she'd say [*in a different voice*] "Hi, I'm the cow. I was there. . . . Hi, I'm the dove. I was there, too. I saw it all." And she'd move faster and faster behind the holes, trying to get this symphony going.

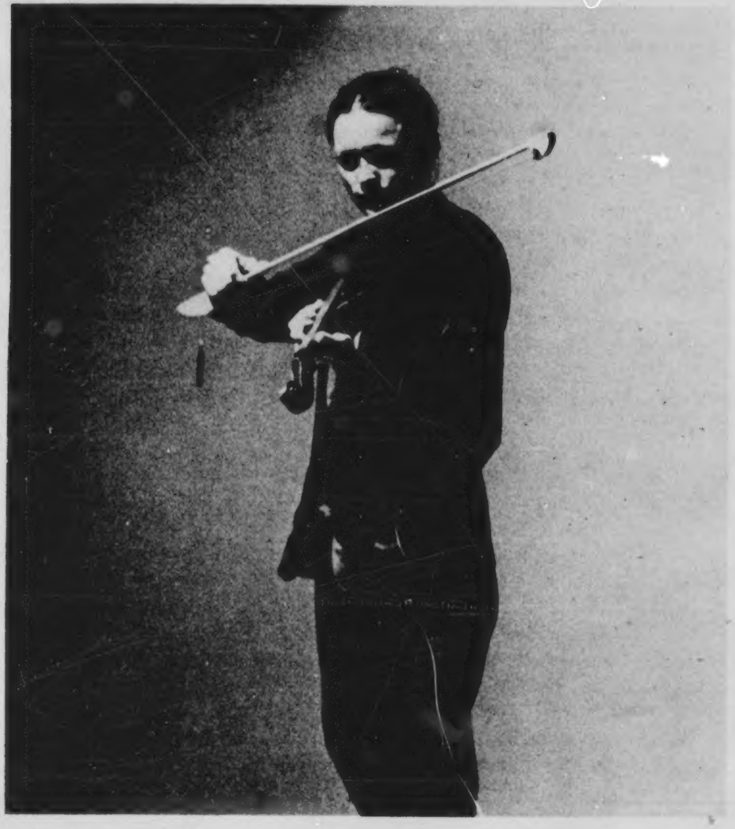
And the service would cut abruptly to Dr. Jay, who'd say, "First, Miss Velma's gonna come up and shoot this arrow through a balloon. Then she's gonna do an Indian dance. Finally she's gonna play a song on the melophone." And then with no further explanation, Miss Velma comes up. First she shoots an arrow through a balloon, then she does an Indian dance, and finally she plays a song on the melophone. Like a prophecy fulfilled.

More violin playing. There is some applause, and Anderson comically whispers, "Ah, the sense of power!" She begins to tell a story.

A couple of months ago, I got a call from the Tesla Institute in Belgrade, Yugoslavia. [*Green slide.*] The voice was very faint, and it said, "We understand that many of your works have been dedicated to Nikola Tesla, and we understand the blackout of information on this important scientist in the US of A, so we would like to invite you to the Institute to speak as a free speaker. . . a free citizen of the world. . . a free speaker speaking on the American Imperialist Blackout of Information, Capitalist Obstruction on Scientific and Technological Advances, and the Western World's Obfuscation of New Data. So think about it." Click. And I thought, "Gee, really a chance to speak my mind," and I started doing research on Tesla's life. . . and it's a sad story and not one that many Americans know. He was, of course, the inventor of the Tesla Coil, as well as AC current and numerous systems for gathering and measuring energy. Tesla came [*Map of US slide.*] over from Graz in Austria and began to work for Edison. Edison couldn't stand Tesla [*Arrow appears.*] for several reasons. . . and one was that Tesla came to work every morning dressed very formally—morning coat, top hat, spats—and this just wasn't the American way. . . . Edison also hated Tesla because he invented so many things. . . while wearing these clothes. Edison had spies in Tesla's labs, stole his patents—he did everything in his power to make Tesla's life totally miserable. Finally Tesla couldn't stand it any more, and he went out to Colorado and set up a lab. . . but he wasn't very popular there, either, because he was setting up huge electromagnetic fields for his coils and every time someone in the neighborhood turned on the water they received enormous electric shocks.

Perhaps the real turning point, the real reversal in Tesla's career, was Niagara Falls. [*Sound of water.*] Tesla invented the generators that converted the Falls into the cleaner and more efficient AC current. When Tesla arrived in this country, it was still basically DC.

Tape Bow Violin Solo



Edison was dead-set against the conversion of energy to this form and again did everything he could to prevent the conversion. In his later years, Edison was something of a showman, and he went around upstate New York on the Chautauqua circuit, giving demonstrations of the evil effects of AC current. And he always brought a dog with him on stage, and he got up and said, [*Fade water*] "Ladies and gentlemen, I will now demonstrate the effects of AC current on this dog." And he'd take two bare wires and attach them to the dog's head, and the dog would be dead in under 10 seconds.

I thought I'd open the series of talks in Belgrade with a song called the Dance of Electricity and it's an actual dance...and its beat is derived from this actual dance—a kind of involuntary dance—and it's the dance you do when one of your fingers is caught in a live socket, and your arms start pumping up and down, and your mouth opens and closes...but no words come out.

[*She performs dance. Alternate arrows appear on the screen. As music fades, howling of dogs can be heard.*]

The lights are brought up. The organ-playing and a slower pace suddenly create a church-like atmosphere.

ANDERSON: A couple of months ago, an earthquake was reported in parts of the Bronx and New Jersey. It registered 3.5 on the Richter scale, and it was the largest quake of this magnitude since 1927. The scientists at nearby Princeton, however, missed the quake. They said, "At the time of the earthquake, we were changing our chart paper." [*Lights dim.*]

MALE READER: You can read the signs; you've been on this road before. Do you want to go home? Do you want to go home now?

ANDERSON: This is the way we say hello. It is the distance between two points.

MALE READER: You know, you look like a car. From a distance, say from a few blocks away, you look exactly like a car. You look just like a car from a distance.

ANDERSON: Oh, oh cantaire. Oh, oh, oh volare. I am in my body the way most people drive their cars.

MALE READER: He thought of space that way. As something you could fall into. . . falling for miles. . . sideways.

ANDERSON: Looking into his eyes was like walking into a large municipal building. He had perfected an arrangement of his face that suggested International Style architecture—a subtle yet daring blend of American industry's most durable yet flexible materials. His expression always seemed to suggest he had just finished saying, "That's the way things will be in the year 2000."

MALE READER: In my dream, I am your customer. And the customer is always right.

ANDERSON: Every night, he woke up calling, "Fred! Fred! How could you do this to me? How could you go now, after all we've been through together?" And when he woke up, he always said he had never known anyone named Fred, or even Ned, or Ted.

MALE READER: I can draw you with no ears. I can draw you so you have no ears at all. So where your ears would be, there is only blank paper.

ANDERSON: I wanted you, and I was looking for you. But I couldn't find you. I wanted you, and I was looking for you all day. But I couldn't find you. Couldn't find you.

MALE READER: The detective novel is the only novel truly invented in the 20th century. In the detective novel, the hero is dead at the very beginning. So you don't have to deal with human nature at all, only the slow accumulation of facts, of data. In science fiction movies, the hero just flies in at the very beginning. He can forge steel with his bare hands, he can walk in zero gravity. But no one says, "How do you think he can walk in zero gravity?" They just say, "Look! He can forge steel with his bare hands," and this way you don't have to deal with human nature at all.

ANDERSON: When TV signals are sent out, they don't stop. They keep going. They pick up speed as they leave our solar system. By now, the first TV programs ever made have been traveling for thirty years. They are well beyond our solar system now. All those characters from cowboy serials, variety hours, and quiz shows are sailing out. They are the first true voyagers into deep space. And they travel faster and faster. . . intact. . . still talking.

And as we learn to listen farther and farther into space, this is what we hear, we hear them traveling. They are jamming our lines. This is what we hear, and they keep traveling faster. We listen farther, and we hear them. The sound of their voices and sounds of speeding away. Like a phone. . . continuously. . . ringing. [*Soft telephone ringing. Image of Man and Woman from Pioneer 11 plate appear.*]

Vanessa James: Designer

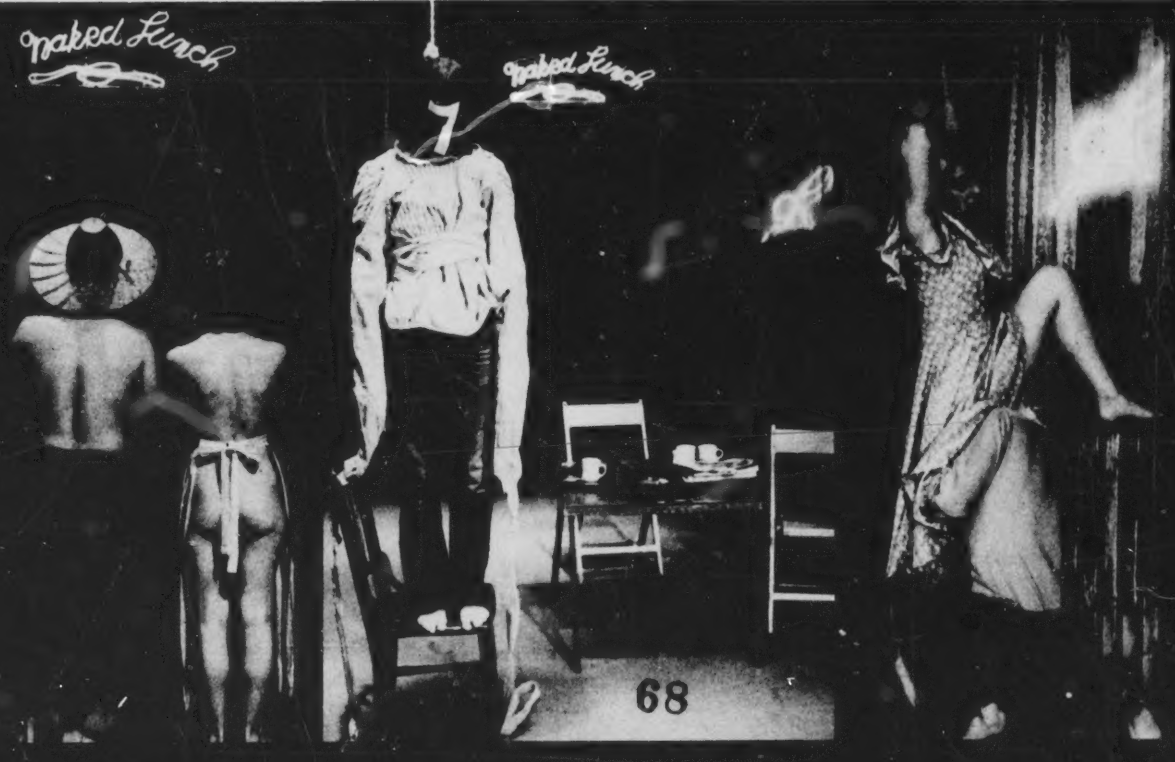
by Jill Neimark

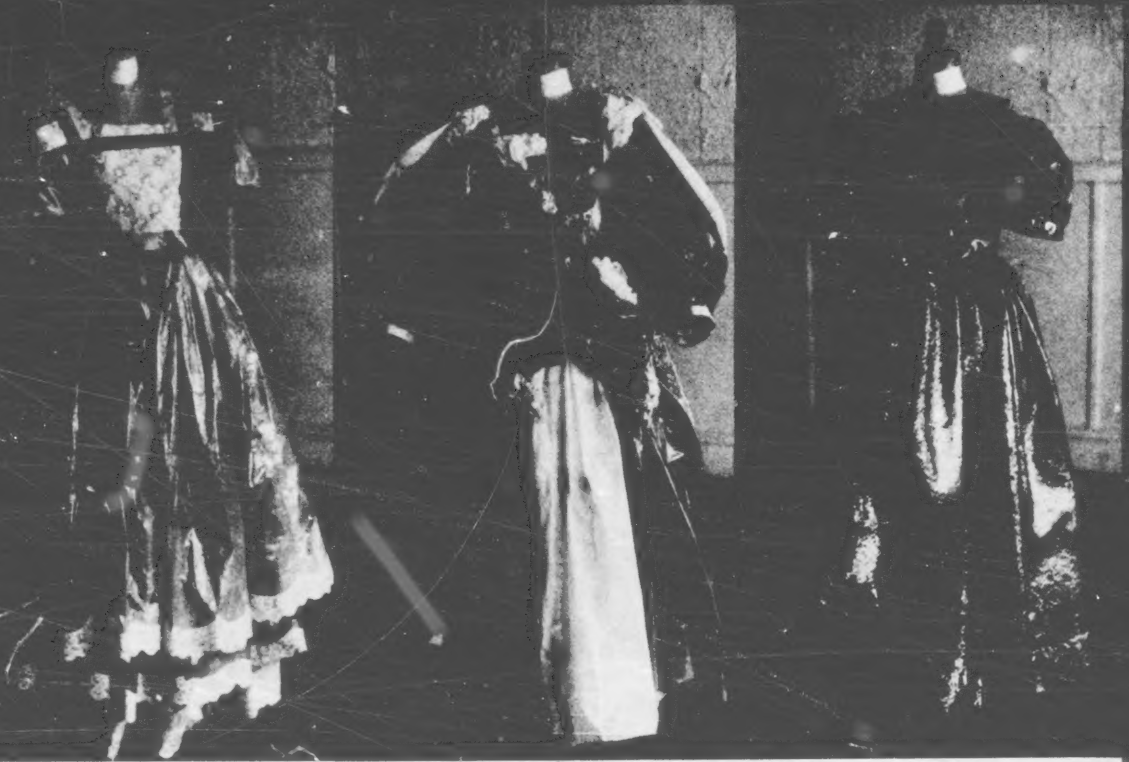
For the last 15 years Vanessa James has been creating her sumptuous stage environments out of materials such as garbage bags, plastic wrap, scrapped plastics, synthetic fabric, foam rubber, mirrors, corrugated cardboard and acrylic paint. She culls her "stuffs" from corporations like Mobile Oil and International Paper, as well as the waste bins of commercial studios where she works during the day. By night she creates her art works for the stage. They have been part of more than 50 productions in the United States and England, and have been exhibited at galleries in New York, Cambridge, Salt Lake City and Bristol, as well as Studio 54, the Port Authority Bus Terminal and the George Washington Bridge. Her creations combine the remote, formal beauty of previous centuries with the products of contemporary industry. In her own words, "As an artist I chose theatre as my primary medium and have tried to break down the barrier between the visual arts and designing for the performing arts. To that end I've worked with painters, sculptors and poets as well as theatre designers." The result is startling, resplendent, and not without a touch of humor.

James began her career when she bypassed the traditional route of a Cambridge/Oxford education for the Wimbledon College of Art. The chairman of the department insisted that she enroll within two days of her admission, so she left high school without completing final exams and spent her first year drawing for 10 hours a day and painting late into the night. After amassing a solid though conservative grounding in art, she began to specialize. Her choice was theatre design, and over the next few years she learned to create every aspect of the stage environment, being trained in millinery, shoemaking, dressmaking, architecture, history and mechanics.

Upon leaving Wimbledon, she took a post-graduate degree at the University of Bristol, where she was apprenticed to the Bristol Theatre Company and created, in 1967, a transparent and translucent plastic set for *The Tempest*. The costumes were constructed from plastics as well. At that time their noise and stiffness was regarded as a drawback by many of the actors. Last spring, however, James was asked to create 180 costumes that provided the only and necessary noise in a three-hour silent theatre piece. The clothes rustled, crackled, sighed and whispered.

From Bristol she went on to design for the Royal Court Theatre in London and the Long Wharf Theatre in New Haven, where she was the assistant of Ming Cho Lee. There she began to collaborate with director Donald Sanders, a student at Yale Drama who was interested in the conjunction of visual and theatre arts as well as in bringing literature to the stage in the form of transposed novels, stories and poetry. They worked on productions in Chicago, Boston, Buffalo and New York City, bringing an adaptation of William Burroughs' *Naked Lunch* to the Public Theatre in 1974. The set and costumes were, by choice, spare, consisting of almost nothing but tables and chairs and old clothes. The single constant set piece was a large neon sign saying *Naked Lunch*.



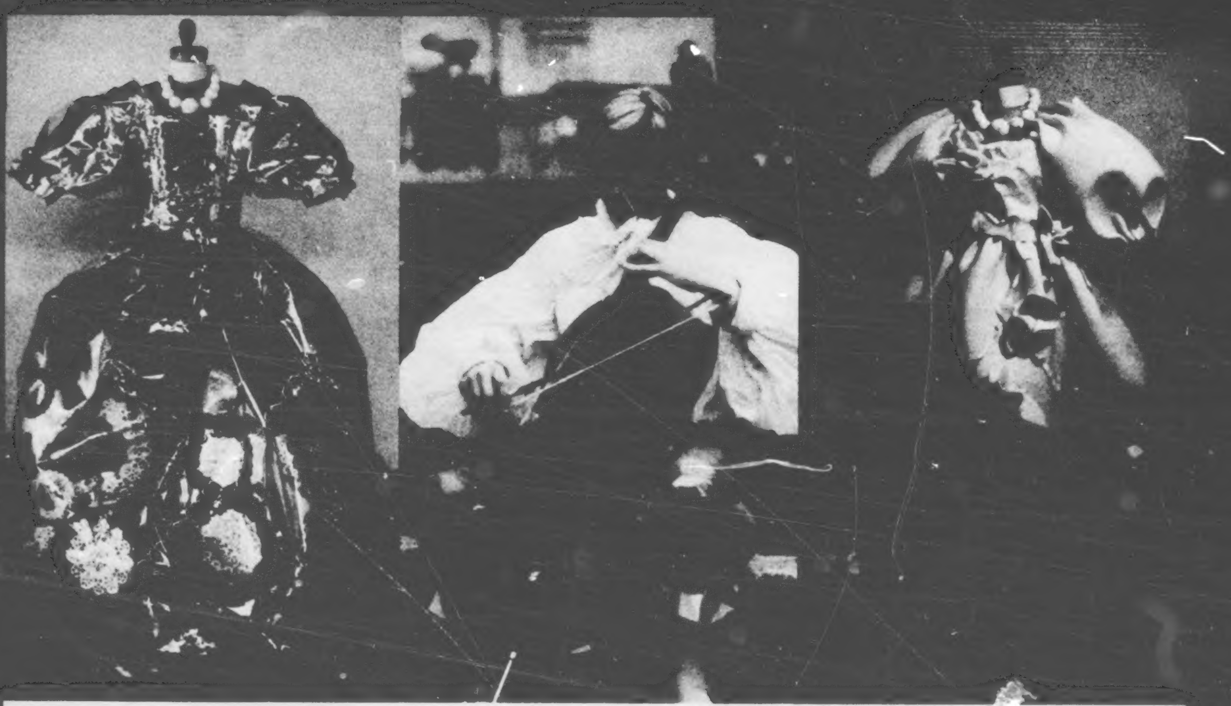


A year later, at the East 14th Street Theatre, she created an equally spare but startling set design for Brecht's *The Seven Deadly Sins*. It included seven roller blinds, with varying textures and pictures, each marked with the name of a different city, that were to be pulled down as the play progressed. Above the shades were the seven deadly sins in neon. The costumes were made of plastic and vinyl.

For Arnold Weinstein's *Outrage*, produced in Chicago, she projected a painted moon onto the backdrop, which the actors appeared to climb and walk on. Her set for *Approaching Simone*, a play by Megan Terry produced in Buffalo, was a system of raised blue and yellow walkways for the actors. The audience sat below.

Spareness, however, is not typical of James' style. Earlier this year, for the first production of the New York Art Theatre Institute, a theatre company she helped create along with Donald Sanders and Linda Blumberg, she designed nearly 200 elaborate baroque costumes. They were constructed of recycled and discarded materials—garbage bags in black, candy yellow, rose, white and sky blue, translucent cleaner's bags, drop cloths, plastic tablecloths, wallpaper, copper and silver mylar, paper doilies and cardboard. Without the aid of needle and thread, buttons or zippers, she made the plastic and paper clothes lasting and wearable. James pleated, flounced, bunched and joined sleeves, skirts, belts, collars and pants with gaffer's tape and glue.

The process was not a simple one. In fact, she began designing the costumes while director Sanders was still beginning to shape the piece itself, which was to be titled *33 Scenes on the Possibility of Human Happiness*, living tableaux that would present "a trivial surface that is essentially sublime." He came in one day with a proposed list of titles, such as "The Shoemaker," "The Barber," "The Reformed Lady," and general evocations like "gentlemen with love knots—ladies—pearls and lace—great long windows—fountains." Each costume was to be baroque in style, of original design and distinct from all others. The budget was $100—or 60¢ a costume.



She started by constructing a fabric out of one of the cheapest materials available—newspaper, which she cut into newsprint lace, and backed with a roll of clear contact paper and plastic wrap. From this she made the first dress, adding a layered and scalloped collar of tissue paper, and black sleeves of garbage bags, puffed and pleated. Working steadily and intensively for over four months, she was able to create all 180 costumes. Each was recognizably distinct. On one dress made of kraft paper, with a bodice of corrugated cardboard that emulated the bone-and-silk of the 1640s, she used black masking tape to create on the skirt shapes and sections that were baroque in feeling. A bow was constructed of joint tape—the kind used to spackle walls—for a final and "delicate" touch. She made lace out of paper doilies, or she layered plastic wrap many times over and flounced and bunched it with tissue paper roses from clothes cleaners. Plastic tablecloths, textured wallpaper and gilded plastics imitated the stiff richness of an earlier age. She made no sketches for the costumes, finding that the material dictated the process and result. The lucency of the garbage bags effected subtle color changes in the plastic or paper beneath them. Something as simple as the pleating on a clear plastic gown could reflect light with a brilliancy of variation that precluded ornamental jewels.

With pictures of the existing costumes in hand and black garbage bags in her briefcase, James convinced corporations like Johnson and Johnson, Unifoil and Mobile to donate hundreds of rolls of gaffer's tape and plastics. Walking down the street, she would spot a garbage bag in a new shade, a Dresden green or red, and manuever a trade with the owner of the establishment. Because rehearsals for the production were well underway, she began to design the look of specific scenes. One, "Wedding in the City," she wanted to look like a big chocolate box wrapped in foil. She decided against painting materials in metallics and eventually dressed all the wedding guests in sweeping copper mylar gowns.

Sound was an important part of the costume design as well. For the first scene, entitled "Air," she found the quietest material available—foam rubber—and designed a costume for a Cupid after Tiepolo. The scene immediately following was a ball, with dresses constructed entirely of stiff brown paper. As the women glided into the room, harsh and crackling noises filled the studio space. For "Wedding in the Country," a parallel scene to the city wedding, the costumes were all of clear plastic. The bride's train, made of plastic wrap, billowed in several waves that rose five feet into the air.

The men's shirts, almost all of white garbage bags with puffed sleeves, filtered the light and suggested an overly expressed romanticism. She created jewelry as well—the elegance of huge styrofoam pearls above a silver mylar dress—and round hats with feathers, made of plasterboard and mirrored to reflect light onto the faces of the actors. Rubber gloves with wide cardboard cuffs added another humorous decorative touch.

The set, in contrast, was remarkably simple. The pillars of the loft space, painted white, were frequently used, as well as occasional chairs, fruit baskets, and a bench. This spareness emphasized the rich elaboration of the costumes, which became both the mood and environment of the piece. They illustrated James' conviction that costume and set design should not be merely illustrative or emphasize a point already made by script or actor but should exist as an imaginative extension of the moment itself.

Her set and costumes for the New York Art Theatre's five-show, 14-hour adaptation of Turgenev's *The Torrents of Spring* faithfully reproduce the details of the narrative and yet lyrically extend the mood through various departures—including costumes for chairs, and food platters and pastries made out of cardboard painted in unlikely colors. James' first problem was to design a set that could contain, within one room, 18 different sets. She designed a series of interlocking nylon curtains of a white translucent tone that allow the actors to continually change the shape of the space and can realize both the smallness of a bedroom and the unfolding length of palatial grounds. The curtains, hung with gold hoops, fall in an overblown neoclassical style and filter both window and artificial light. They can approximate the ordinariness of the room itself or allow a transformation into a dreamlike sequence with the added effects of pastel lights and music by Glinka, Meyerbeer and Mozart.

The novel itself concerns two households, that of the middle class Roselli family and the inordinately wealthy Polozovs. To depict the Roselli atmosphere, James employed authentic costumes and furniture from the period, candelabras with real candles, oil lamps and chairs and tables of extremely simple line painted white. For the flamboyant and infinitely wealthier Polozovs, however, she ventures into the fantastical. Most of the costumes are made of synthetic materials that resemble the silks and satins of the 1840s but were consciously chosen for their palpable difference from the original materials, for their lightness and airiness. They are shaped very precisely in the fashions of the time, which James extensively researched. It was the first big era of pants (instead of britches), a time of very tight and long waists, tall hats, elaborate ruffled blouses and suitcoats with tails below the knees for men. The household of the Polozovs—which in keeping with the grandeur of their station, occupies the whole of the space—contains glittering furniture as well as period pieces. Chairs wear silver, gold, velvet and lace. James' humor is present in the intricate and oddly colored cardboard gourmet dishes: as one character describes Polozov eating "eight spoonfuls of jam, Russian jam, which his valet brought him in a genuine green Kiev jar," he is actually spooning air out of a tall cardboard cylinder ranged with projecting, winglike wafers.

Bouquets of flowers in the Polozov household are made out of nylon, spattered with glitter, like artificial jewels. The wife of Polozov, an imposing and stunning woman, makes her first entrance in a gown the same white color as the curtains. The congruence suggests her own extension into and command of the landscape. Her dresses, which are wide, stiff and lovely, sport transparent plastic grapes and costume jewelry.

Because the play is performed in time spans from three to 14 hours, James created a window behind the audience seats, where those who wish to stretch, walk or eat can continue to observe the show. The window intensifies the audience impression of watching real life proceed at its leisure, since the length of the show and the attention to such details as dressing, undressing or eating, lend a somnolent, yet realistic quality to the performance.

Vanessa James' projects for the future include a dramatic exhibition in a gallery, where she will show portraits of people liberally transformed by the imagination, while the people themselves move about the gallery in costumes of plastics and cloths that she will design specifically for them. She also plans a series of fabulous and intricate costumes for furniture and will continue to investigate the possibilities for plastics in set and costume design, for, as she notes, "plastic, unlike cloth, reflects highlights as white. The difference can be enormous."

***Jill Neimark** has published interviews and poetry in* New York Arts Journal, *the* Massachusetts Review *and other magazines.*

Linda Mussman's Time and Space Limited Theatre

by Jim O'Quinn

From the moment a Linda Mussman performance begins, it is apparent that she and her actors intend to use the theatre's basic tools—language and movement—in highly unconventional ways. Sentences begin, but splinter or dissolve into fragments before they are finished. Words are stretched and distorted and twisted out of shape. Phrases drone like incantations till their meanings dissolve. The actors move in quick athletic bursts, or haltingly like wind-up toys, or in formal patterns like dancers. They freeze unexpectedly with a face or hand or foot isolated in a pool of light. Whether it is Mussman's own playfully abstract poetry as in her "triptych" *Room/Raum, Door* and *Window* (1978-79), the flowing rhetoric of Georg Buchner's *Danton's Death* (1980), or the delicate narrative of a Japanese fantasy play, *The Bandit Princess* (1978), the language of the piece is fragmented, its delivery restructured, and it is associated with oddly stylized movement.

Director Mussman most often presents the work of her company, the Time and Space Limited Theatre, in the group's 20-foot by 100-foot black-walled performance space at 139 West 22nd Street. Invariably there are few sets or props—the big rectangular room is almost bare. Homemade lighting instruments hang from poles placed horizontally, vertically and diagonally around the playing area. The atmosphere is informal; at "curtain" the actors, often with scripts in hand, stroll casually into the space and take their positions. Spectators may be seated in a variety of configurations—in single lines along the walls, in traditional tiered rows at one end of the space, or in two or three clusters around the room. Even though Time and Space Limited is in its eighth New York season and has regularly offered such staples as Beckett, Pinter, Ibsen and Chekhov, audiences for the most part remain small. They also seem attentive, responsive, and often intensely involved in the ideas and sensations evoked by Mussman's vision.

This article will examine that vision—particularly as it is expressed in *Room/Raum, Door* and *Window*, Mussman's own abstract experiments in language and theatrical form—through a series of interviews, photographs, and samples from the texts. The contributors, interviewed separately, are actor F. Murray Abraham, who took part in the development of the original productions of *Door* and *Window*; Claudia Bruce, who appeared in all three plays and has been a major performer for Mussman since 1977; the theatre's assistant director Larry Russell; and Mussman herself.

Now 32, Mussman was raised on a farm in Indiana and came to New York in 1969 fresh from four years of theatre studies at Purdue University. She directed for Theatre East on 59th Street, the University of the Streets on the Lower East Side and other theatres before founding Time and Space Limited in a Bond Street storefront in 1972. The following year her theatre accepted an invitation to move to the Universalist Church on Central Park West, where Mussman startled audiences with a dance-like version of Sartre's *No Exit* and a bare-staged *Hedda Gabler* played in whiteface. She dramatized Beckett's short novel *The Lost Ones* in 1973, three years before Mabou Mines' more celebrated version; attracted press attention with a Bicentennial adaptation of Gertrude Stein's *The Making of Americans*; and presented a violently restructured version of Strindberg's *The Creditors* at the New Theatre Festival in Baltimore in 1977, in which the battle of the sexes was choreographed like a boxing match. In 1978 she began for the first time to write her own text, a filmscript that eventually became *Room/Raum*.

Room/Raum

MUSSMAN: After making theatre out of the writings of Stein and (Virginia) Woolf, every play that I read sort of shifted and pulled in my mind. There seemed to be no consciousness of langauge in the theatre. When I set out to experiment on my own, I went to the novels. Plays didn't offer me that freedom. The way that Stein and Woolf dealt with their own particular problems through form sort of inspired me to figure out a new way to use language for the theatre. There was no form for me to use. I had to invent my own.

I wanted to work outside of character, and story, and plot, and so on, in a nonnarrative, nonlinear sort of way, which Stein and Woolf had attempted to do in different ways in their own time. I was also influenced by music, or the structure of music, and by film. I have always had a tremendous desire to work in film, and a lot of my work is cinematic in a way that you don't usually see in the theatre. *Room/Raum* was originally a filmscript, organized into cinematic images. After I wrote it, I tore it apart and rearranged it; I don't know how many versions I went through. When the actors finally got it, there were something like two or three pages left. They said, "What is this stuff?" I said, "All right, I'll write everything I know about this." And then I came up with a 100-page script. Of course not all of that stayed in, but that's how the whole middle section of the play came into being, the cliches or sort of "normal talk" parts of the script. This really helped the actors by providing a little reality for them to get a grip on in this whole field of abstractions.

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Room/Raum, in its most complete version, features four performers. One woman (Betty LaRoe) delivers the main text in English, while a second woman (Claudia Bruce) recites the same basic material in German. Often they speak in unison or near-unison, or echo each other in alternating patterns. A male actor (Tony Zanetta, and later Jim Howley) delivers a separate "text of cliches" associated to the main text but independent of it. A clarinetist (Paul Peeling) is the fourth performer. His music is bound closely to the text, not only imitating and extending the rhythms of speech but (as Mussman says) "abstracting the language" into pure sound.

Dance critic Anna Kisselgoff noted in the *New York Times* (December 16, 1978) that Mussman functioned in her direction of *Room/Raum* very much as a choreographer:

> *Each element of the production has been fused with another in the way a choreographer works in one idiom. To Miss Mussman, sound, movement and words are equivalent. This is so true that at one point a sentence, or a series of words, is begun by one speaker and completed—not by another speaker—but by a clarinetist. Yet, there is no break or alienation from one medium to the other.*

MUSSMAN: *Room/Raum* is a particular effort to write about the idea of space. It came out of something very functional. We all spend a tremendous amount of time in the boundaries of rooms, and this has a great influence on us. Especially in theatre, one is always in a room, always in the dark. Sometimes I feel like a miner—I never see the light of day, always in a cave, working. I suppose it's another form of what's up here (indicating head), what exists within these walls. Virginia Woolf talked about a room of one's own, and if you're going to invent this mysterious wonderland that becomes your own basic creativity, you have to search out a space to work. People in theatre are always looking for space to work—finding the right place in this city took me years. The play was simply to concrete the idea of these rooms.

The German Language became a part of it because it seems to be the most concrete language—and because there is a great mythological structure attached to the German language that is to me very interesting. All the great philosophers, mathematicians and thinkers were German. The concreting idea becomes very clear in the sound of the language whether or not it is understood.

Does Claudia understand the German as she speaks it?

No, she doesn't know German; she learned it by rote, which makes it even better. That eliminates her trying to communicate, which is a waste of time anyway, so she's out there doing other things. It's a case of an actor being better off not knowing what she's saying. She and Paul (the clarinetist) succeeded more times simply because they didn't have to deal with meaning.

Would you rather not deal with meaning?

Meaning as such is no longer a valid exercise for the last half of the 20th century. My actors are not out there to discuss philosophy. What the play means is up to the freedom of the watcher. *Door* could have been called *Floor* or *Shoe*, it didn't really matter. I chose it—as an artist I made that choice. Perhaps in a hundred years there will be no doors as I know them, but that doesn't matter—the concept will attach itself to something else, and it will still have validity.

Words are strong, dynamic forces, and my theatre uses them to force us to move, to change—not to think, particularly, but to *do* something. It's the arrangement of the words, like the arrangement of stones in a Japanese garden, or the arrangement of music on a page, that makes the difference. If I choose the right words in the right arrangement, it could evoke. . . something. I set out to find out. I was so bold as to choose the words.

Then I brought the actor in and said, "Stop interpreting! Stop meaning!" To get an actor to stop doing that takes months. If an actor says the word "sweet" and says it sweetly, it's of no use. He has killed the whole idea. I'm attempting to get away from that redundancy, that reduction of language to stupidity, to simple meaning. When you move away from meaning, you can move on to other things.

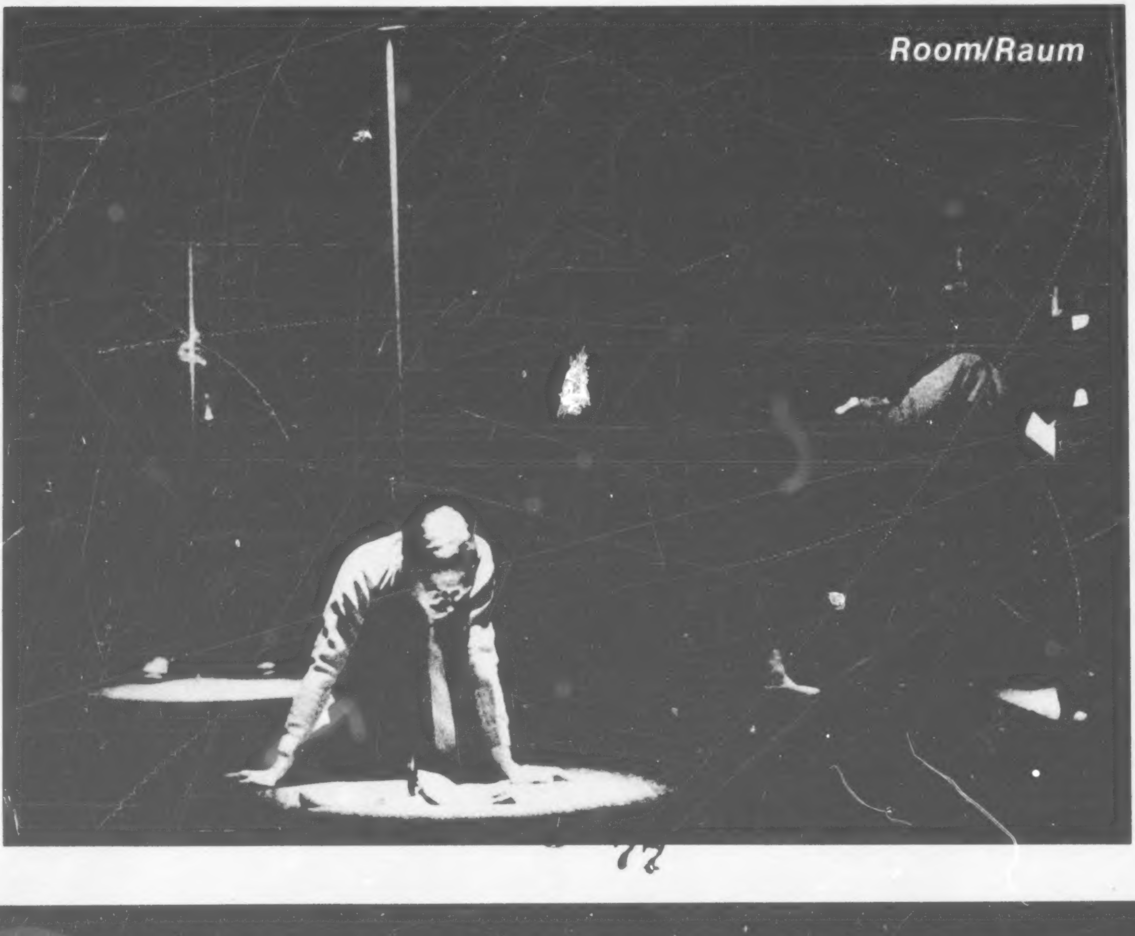
How did your movement style develop?

The movement comes directly out of the language. Any particular group of words will de-form, or re-form, or in-form us how to speak them. Some words tell us where they originated, some seem to have no origins, some are totally useless. Words can be torn apart. It's possible to affect words by how you handle them. As you make a word more concrete, it becomes more accurately what it is, outside of meaning—just what it is. Take "door." There is the "d" sound, and the "oo" and the "r." You can break the word into "do-or," or "or-do." This is just as good and as interesting a thing as the thing that "door" is perceived to be.

In all languages certain concepts have similar sounds—mother, father, basic steps of living and growing. Language, it becomes clear, came out of a physical need, not out of an intellectual need to communicate. Something in the body and the mind worked closer together then than now. Today language controls and manipulates us. Television is the most obvious form of that maniuplation—the jingling and repetition of things.

But to get back to your question, the movement begins with the language. To involve the actor in physical activities, I may bring in sticks or blocks of wood, or something equally as abstract. The script, the paper itself, becomes very important to the actors. More than just a body of information that is to be learned and then thrown away, the script becomes a property, a clear-cut part of the play. When Tony (Zanetta) did *Room/Raum*, he used the script a great deal—he would scoop light to himself. There were times that the script almost burned onstage. He would leave it against the light for too long, and it began to smoke. It was very interesting.

CLAUDIA BRUCE, actor: Linda gives you a structure, and you're free within that structure to experiment and search. When you hit a wrong note, you know it, and if you don't, she will. And when you as an actor show a glimpse of possibility, Linda as a director will pick it up and go with it. She reads her actors extremely well, very quickly and precisely.



Room/Raum

ROOM/RAUM (Excerpt)

In the first four of *Room/Raum's* 18 textual images, the left-hand column represents the main text; the right-hand column carries the same basic text in German; and the center column, when it appears, is the "text of cliches," spoken independently of the main text. The role of the clarinet was developed in rehearsal, and is not indicated in the script.

IMAGE #1

A		EIN
A CON		EIN KON
A CON-CRETE		EIN KON-CRETES
A CONCRETE		EIN KONCRETES

THE	TO BE	DAS
THE CON	TO BE	DAS KON
THE CON-CRETE	TO BE	DAS KON-CRETES
THE CONCRETE	TO BE	DAS KONCRETES

CON	TO BE	KON
CONCRETE	TO BE IS	KONCRETES
CONCRETE	TO BE SURE	KONCRETES
CONCRETE	TO BE PAVED	KONCRETES
CONCRETE	TO BE POURED	KONCRETES
CONCRETE	TO BE HARD	KONCRETES
CONCRETE	TO BE DURABLE	KONCRETES
CONCRETE	TO BE ROCK	KONCRETES
CONCRETE	TO BE SOLID	KONCRETES
CONCRETE	TO BE FIRM	KONCRETES
CONCRETE	TO BE DEFINITIVE	KONCRETES

IMAGE #2

AN ACCURACY WITHIN
A THINGS OWN LIMITATIONS
A QUESTION THAT
ANSWERS ITSELF
A FORM
FORMING ITSELF
ALWAYS FORMING ITSELF
ON BY ITS OWN DIMENSIONS
A SELF ONLY EXPLICABLE
OF ITSELF BY ITSELF
NOT A REGRET
NOT A LOVE STORY

EINE GENAUIGKEIT IN DEN
BESCHRÄNKUNGEN
EINES DINGES SELBST
EINE FRAGE DIE
SICH SELBER LÖST
EINE FORM
SICH SELBST FORMEND
SICH IMMER SELBST
WEITER FORMEND
DURCH IHRE EIGENEN
DIMENSIONEN
EIN SELBST NUR ERKLÄRBAR
VON SICH DURCH SICH
KEIN BEDAUERN
KEINE LIEBESGESCHICHTE

IMAGE #3

THIS IS THE FIRST MOVEMENT
THIS IS THE BEGINNING
THIS IS JUST THE BEGINNING
THIS IS THE START
THIS IS JUST THE STARTING
THIS IS THE PASSING OF TIME

THEN THE RECOGNITION OF BOREDOM
THEN THE DUMB SHOW
THEN THE FREEDOM

(INTERLUDE)

THIS IS NAMED REPEATING
A TERM USED IN MUSIC
A TERM THAT MEANS GO BACK
GO BACK DO IT AGAIN
THE SAME WAY OR REPEAT
OR REPEATING
OR REPETITION
OR GET UP
OR EAT LUNCH
OR WASH SOCKS
OR MAKE MONEY
OR FACE THE MUSIC

IMAGE #4

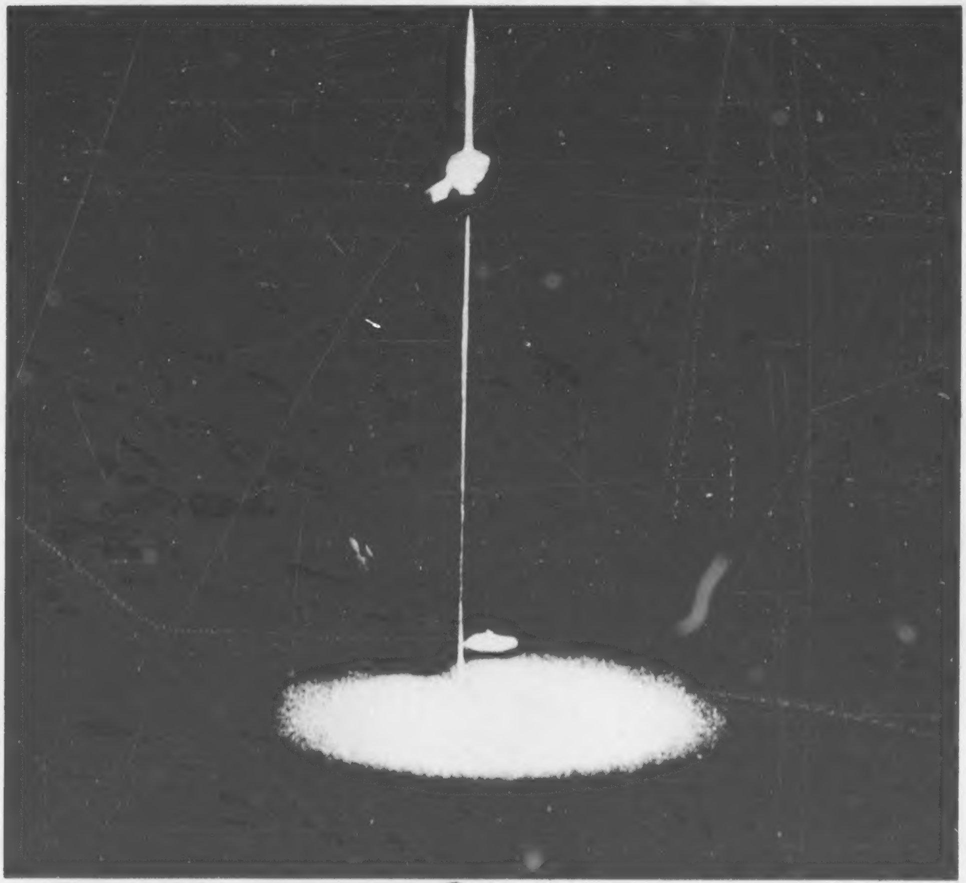
(1)
TIME IS TIME
THERE IS TIME
DEFINED BY
TIME ITSELF
TO BE ITS NATURE
TO BE EXACT
WITHOUT EMOTION
OUT WITH MOTIONS

(2)
YOU MUST GO ON NOW
NOW YOU MUST GO ON
NO INTERLUDE HERE

TIME IS TIME
THERE IS TIME
DEFINED BY
TIME ITSELF
TO BE ITS NATURE
TO BE EXACT
WITHOUT EMOTION
OUT WITH MOTIONS

IF I HAD
KNOWN YOU
WERE COM ING
I WOULD
HAVE
BAKED
A
CAKE

ZEIT IST ZEIT
ES GIBT NUR ZEIT
DEFINIERT DURCH DIE
ZEIT SELBST
UM IHRE NATUR ZU SEIN
EXAKT ZU SEIN
OHNE GE-FÜHLE
ZEIGT EUER FÜHLEN



Give me an example of a specific structure, and how you work within it.

In one of our first exercises for *Room/Raum*, Linda handed Betty (LaRoe) and me hammers. We started with the concrete object—there we were walking around hammering on things. She gave us a nail, and the instructions were to take five steps and hit the nail with the hammer. That's how structured it was. From that beginning, a system of movement develops—the five steps become 15, the nail disappears, suddenly the hammer is gone out of your hand—and finally you've moved into total abstraction. It's a very logical progression.

That kind of exercise was the beginning. Then as we moved into *Door* and *Window*, and were more acquainted with that kind of process, we could drop the elemental stage and move right into the things that are right out there on the edge—which is where *Window* is right now. It's still developing, and we're right out there on the edge, looking. As yet we haven't had the performance time to make it work as well as the others.

F. MURRAY ABRAHAM, actor: In Linda's work, the subjective approach of all these actors, looking for an objective truth—with the help of the audience—makes it a very hard thing to pin down. The symbols that we're looking for in ourselves, the physical actions that come out of the emotions that we are experiencing—these things are as much a surprise to any of us as they are to the audience.

As far as the origins of the movement, I would even go so far as to suggest that it is sound itself as well as language. Take "sleep," for example. "Sleep" is a wonderful word. You don't have to perform that word by going to sleep! Why can't you take a piece of "sleep"? Take off the "p," which is very abrupt. It's the "slee-ee" which puts you to sleep. Examine that. When you start thinking in those terms, of sounds as well as words, different actions will come out of it. For me, having lived for 40 years with the word "sleep" meaning a specific thing, there are certain physical actions I have to make to break out of that mold. It is a mold—it's like a suffocating mummy-case. The time comes that you feel you have to break the mold; perhaps you have to do something totally outrageous to find out again what makes "sleep" mean sleep. That's what Linda's theatre is examining: the world around us, in very simple physical terms—it's very simple, very abstract, very strong. The secret of any creative process is that search, that sense of discovery, that excitement.

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Door and *Window* are conceptually and stylistically similar to *Room/Raum*, but move in different directions to create what Mussman calls "a new language, a language outside of meaning."

The text of *Door* depends heavily on free association, wordplay and musical constructions. It is performed by three actors (Bruce, LaRoe and Peeling), and, in its most developed versions, features a percussion score played on frying pans, cracker tins and kitchen tools as well as more traditional instruments. In March of this year *Door* was performed on, under and around three wooden sculpture units constructed by Susan Yelavich at the Cooper-Hewitt Museum.

Paul Peeling

Betty LaRoe

Claudia Bruce

Window is the most straightforwardly poetic of the "triptych," and makes the least use of verbal tricks and distortions. Most recently it has been performed by two actresses, Bruce and LaRoe. Several wood-frame window units suspended at different angles into the playing space provide a suggestive setting. Mussman describes *Window* as "lyrical and intangible, about living in a constant stage of change. The piece is about memory—not the act of remembering, as in Proust, but memory as form."

MUSSMAN: *Room/Raum, Door* and *Window* represent different steps in an experimental process. I approach theatre like a scientist—do one thing and this happens, do a different thing and this happens. *Door*, more than the others, is an associative text—it uses free association and random thought processes. It has units like music has measures. I said: "I'm going to put measures of ideas together—but they're not going to have connections in the linear sense, not going toward an ending or telling a story. They will be musical units that happen to collide, or sit beside each other, or share space, or argue for space, or exist in a particular way that doesn't necessarily connect."

The idea of "a door" had very little to do with it by the time the piece was made. The idea was to put my focus on something, to distract myself. I began to write about something that was related to the conception of "a door"—something that opens and shuts, that is neither this or that, that relies on hinge, and so on. That's what my problem was. I concentrated hard on the pure abstraction of door, staying away from: "What does a door mean?"

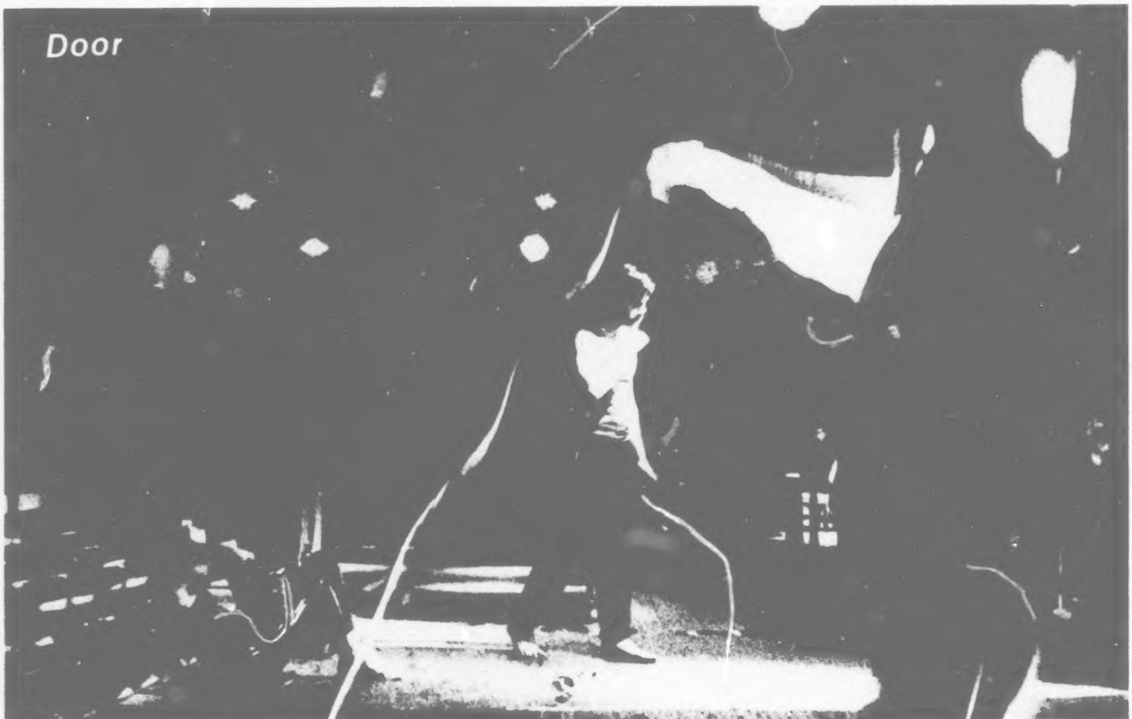
BRUCE: With *Door*, we began with three columns of words listed on the page. That was it. Linda said: "Okay, let's do *Door*." We started reading, and Linda said: "Start walking." So as we are walking around and reading the words, all of a sudden the words begin telling you things to do—not necessarily literal things. Anything can happen. It's a vary scary thing for an actor to do, because you're always out there with the possibility of making a fool of yourself and getting egg all over your face. But I've found that Linda always prepares you. I have never worked with anyone who gets you so prepared.

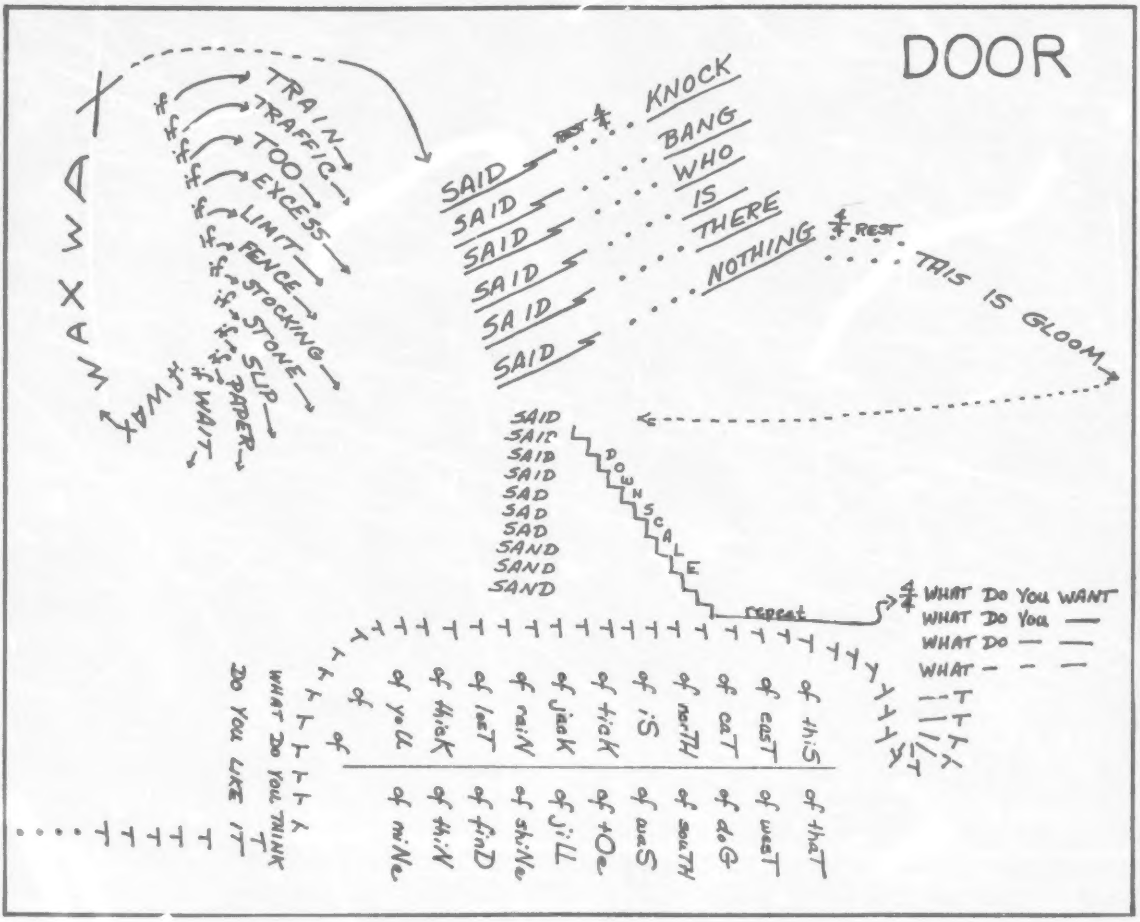
The lighting in these pieces, especially in DOOR, seems to have a life all its own.

LARRY RUSSELL, assistant director: The lights do have an existence all their own. As you know Linda works only with spots, little tin-can lights she shapes herself, and dimmers that people use in their apartments, the kind that pop up and pop down and don't give you a lot of variation or control over the dimness and brightness. But it's lots of fun to work with when you're dealing with the space divided into specific areas, with the actors blocked mainly in those areas. I'm encouraged to do as much as I can with the idea of painting the set with light—not in colors but in terms of light-dark contrast.

What do you as an actor bring to these experimental pieces?

ABRAHAM: In this kind of theatre, I as an actor must be willing to commit myself to the search for something that I can't even describe to you. I'm a very good actor. But if I look at a script and I know just what it's aiming for, and just what I have to do to accomplish that thing—and most actors will know, with a great many scripts—and I undertake that project, I am actually not growing at all. I may be improving my technique, which is all right; or sharpening my skills; or making a living,


Door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DO YOU LIKE IT

Movement Chart from Door

which is nice. But most of all I'm not really growing, not experimenting, not being courageous. And an artist, in order to earn that name, must be courageous. That's one of the tenets of being an artist.

A director who is seeking the truth of a piece can't do it without the help of her actors and her audience. The demands that are put on all three are very great. It's a 100 percent operation. You can't go and expect to lay back and let it happen, like in more traditional theatre. What we're talking about is a discovery for and of ourselves that is simultaneous with the audience's discovery. When we discover it, they will discover it. We can't do it for them, and we can't do it without them.

Linda has the ability to create an atmosphere within which I as an artist feel completely safe to do anything. Andre Serban has this ability, too. It's a rare thing.

BRUCE: The thing that drew me to Linda's work was that I felt a tremendous amount of integrity and honesty in what I saw. The first note to any actress who comes to work with her will be, "Lower your voice." That's the main note I had for a year.

You're talking about pitch, not volume.

Yes, pitch. Women are taught to talk (high voice) way up here. Linda's work involves eliminating those kinds of restrictions. Since I began in *The Moment* (adapted from Virginia Woolf, 1977), I've played dozens of characters, men's roles and women's roles. Where else could I gain that experience?

MUSSMAN: The only way I could find to deal with the things I wanted to in the theatre was to get rid of all the problems—plot, character and so on. It became more and more obvious as I experimented that the less I had to work with the more freedom there was. If I got rid of emotion, something happened; if I got rid of plot, something else happened. I got rid of sets years ago. Once the furniture was gone, I was more aware of light, and of legs and feet and hands. The more I took away from theatre, the clearer it became what theatre basically was. It was not just accidental or coincidental that Kikue (Tashiro) came along with *The Bandit Princess*. Oriental theatre operates with less—it makes something mysterious and beautiful without three truckloads of lumber, 50 actors, a dozen set designers. They do things with language and sound and bodies that most American theatre could never do.

My work attempts to come up with a new langauge, a language outside of meaning. There was one day that I gave up being understood. The desire to be understood is an obstacle to getting work done. I don't care about being understood—I want to create mystery, I want to create beauty, I want to dazzle. When you're startled or excited, you don't understand. That load of meaning is something you just don't need. You can't be afraid for your audience to say, "I don't get it, I don't understand." In a certain way, the less they "get it" the more I've succeeded.

Anne Bogart's Journeys

by Jessica Abbe

Anne Bogart creates and directs experimental theatre pieces. She combines her regard for the individual esthetics of the actors with her own strong structural vision to produce eclectic and unique plays. Her most recent works include *Out of Sync*, performed in March of this year; *Hauptstadt*, in May of 1979; and *Inhabitat*, a play in a house (February 1979 production).

Bogart was born in 1951 into a Navy family. As a child brought up in the military, the longest she stayed in one place was two and a half years in Tokyo between the ages of about six and eight. The frequent moves "from coast to coast and country to country" produced a stream of different schools—private, public, military and boarding. At 14, Bogart got involved in the backstage work of a school play.

"I got a sense of community I'd never felt before. A community that only existed for a number of weeks. Of course I could deal with leaving it, as I always had. It was a metaphor for my own life."

Inhabitat

Anne Bogart views the experience of her plays as journeys: "All the good theatre I've seen takes me on a journey where I'm moved, entertained, inspired or threatened. I'm taken away from my seat and my normal way of thinking, brought to another place, then brought back." In *Inhabitat*, the concept of the journey was made manifest for the audience members, or "visitors," who were brought by truck from a street corner in Manhattan to Bogart's Brooklyn brownstone and led from room to room to view the scenes of the play.

Inhabitat

I'm drawn to the intimate and the naturalistic. Instead of bringing it into the theatre, I go out to it. Of course, there are disadvantages in that you can't take many people with you. But it's intimate and the audience is involved physically.

It was good for me to work in a house in terms of my development as a director. I couldn't rely on tricks because of the close proximity of audience to actor. If anything was wrong it was really wrong. I would suggest to everybody to do a play in a house at some point in their career.

Bogart has further developed the theatrical journey in *Hauptstadt* and *Out of Sync*, leading the audience out of lofts and into nearby Village environs, where they see en route scenes played on the streets or through windows.

Once on the street the audience becomes part of a performance. To the unknowing passerby the conspicuously voyeuristic audience may be more of an oddity, a spectacle, than the scene itself. The watchers are watched, even as the actor "on location" blends in with the ebb and flow of human activity in the East Village and is ignored. Conversely, significant contributions to the audience's perceptions are made by unknowing participants in a street scene. Passersby, through innocent involvement in or intentional ignoring of a scene being enacted, help shape its meaning. A security guard suspiciously approaching apparent loiterers (actors in *Hauptstadt*), unaware of the audience looking on, affects the drama through its context. During a performance of *Out of Sync*, one actor was helping another to a waiting car after a fight scene on Second Avenue when an ambulance stopped. The concerned attendants got out to investigate. Bogart tried to stop them, explaining they were actors in a play, to which one replied, "And all the world's a stage, right, lady?" At that point, the as yet unnoticed audience came to the rescue; thirty people burst into applause. As Bogart describes it, "The street shrank."

The journey above all has to do with changing perceptions. Once the audience leaves the traditional theatre space, the boundaries between spectator and spec-

Hauptstadt

tacle dissolve. The audience gains onlookers of its own; the individual's field of vision is heightened. Suddenly theatre includes the chance image glimpsed through an open window, the clattering sound effect produced by an alley cat and a garbage can, the light snow beginning to fall. Your bank may be transformed into the backdrop for a scene; a playground may be the setting for a conversation accidentally overheard, which may or may not be part of the play but is certainly part of the journey. Watching a Bogart piece is like being inside a movie—you are the camera.

The same play that opens windows on the environment outside the theatre alternately directs the eye toward the microcosmic world of human interaction. In contrast to simple scenes in which "people sit awkwardly and use umms and uhs and say things the wrong way and try again," Bogart composes precisely choreographed dances and series of movements whose appeal is visual rather than visceral. Within one play are juxtapositions of stagey actions within a naturalistic environment, and tiny, awkward mannerisms codified into whole scenes. A moment, gesture or glance between characters is broken down into structural beats, which are then repeated with changes in tempo, resulting in subtle alterations in meaning. This kind of structure provides counterpoint to "the intimate and the naturalistic."

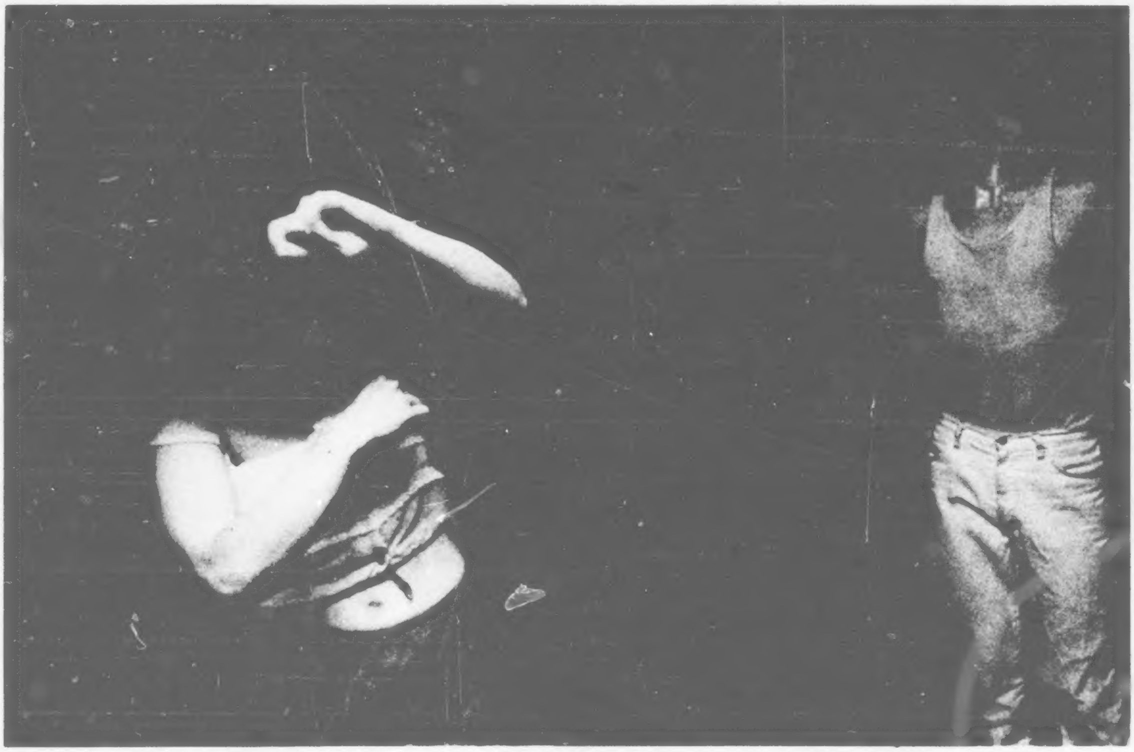
The distinctly eclectic style gives rise to the manner in which a narrative—a series of revelations about the relationships between characters—is exposed through details. In the context of an ultrareal locale, seemingly pedestrian activities

Hauptstadt

are loaded with Chekhovian significance. But the contrasting structural elements keep this significance from becoming overwhelming. They distance the audience.

On the process of creating a piece, Bogart says:

> *I love structuring work. I love taking something that an actor or actors have created and placing it, juxtaposing it, creating new meanings, building signs and signifiers. I'm fascinated by semiotics; I'm fascinated with music, with being like a conductor.*
>
> *I respect the actor's esthetics. I don't look for a homogeneous acting style. I like to work with actors who have particularly different esthetics. For myself, there are two things which create good pieces: my respect for the actor and his or her vision, and my sense of structure.*



The Waves

Generally present in Bogart's work is an element of danger. In *Inhabitat*, it was a feeling produced by a lighted blow torch and actors hanging out of fourth floor windows. Stepping into the street entails a certain risk. During *Hauptstadt* rehearsals, before there was an audience to indicate the theatricality of an event, there were many instances of hostile reactions by chance observers to the characters and their interactions.

There isn't a general reason why there is violence in any of my pieces. In each case it comes for a different reason. In The Waves, *a theatre piece based on Virginia Woolf's novel, the violence came from the interactions between two of the actors who didn't like each other. That's one of the dangers of using people with different esthetics.*

With Inhabitat, *it was a reaction to the situation in my house previous to working there. It was a violent living situation having to do with one person's violent reaction to life in general. I didn't realize so much of it had come into the piece. Our landlords lived below us, and when there were three living in the house they heard a lot of violence going on. They came to the opening night of* Inhabitat, *and afterwards the woman said, "Now I understand what was going on upstairs all the time." Later, they would be downstairs during performances. They said the same kinds of sounds were being made.*

The Waves

I'm not sure what attracts me to the danger of being on the streets of New York. If you step outside of society's limits just a little bit you're immediately surrounded—by police, by violent reactions. The true nature of New York lies just under the surface layer.

Anne Bogart has never done conventional theatre work. She hasn't worked with a script without altering it greatly.

> *I did* Macbeth *once. I did a little bit of* Macbeth. *Using four actors I took the events between Macbeth killing Duncan and finally killing his friend Banquo. I made it a study of how a best friendship can turn into a killing. We used all Shakespearean texts, and it was essentially in order—it's just that there was a lot missing.*

The Waves was another piece significantly different from its original source:

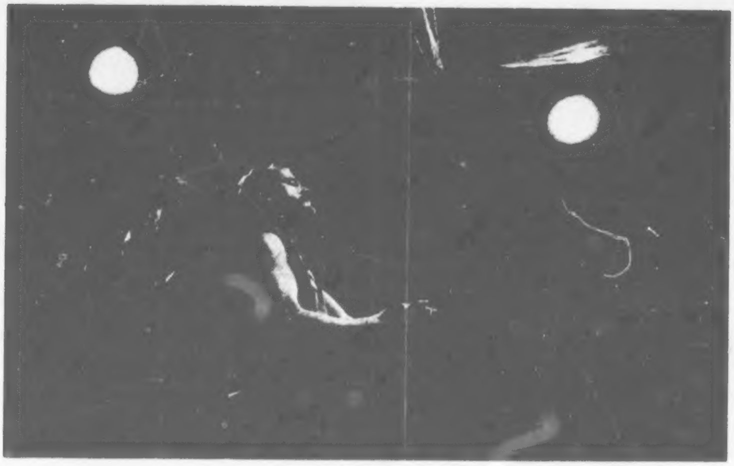
> *I took Virginia Woolf's book and created a piece out of it. Most people could barely recognize the book. There was just an underlying feeling of it. I start with many ideas but in the end only a few are taken and expanded on. I always throw out most of what I come up with. It's always a heartbreaking process. I think 80 percent of the preparation work goes out the window.*
>
> *I would like to take a script and make a contract with myself to do every word of it in the order it's written. It's something I've never done. I don't trust the playwright enough—not even Shakespeare.*

As a director, Bogart allows the actors certain freedoms but in the end comes close to the concept of the director as a benevolent dictator. Her present method of directing stems from a process of evolution. It began with her early view of actors as irresponsible prima donnas ("You must remember that this was in high school"). She discovered the other extreme during her time as an actor with Via Theatre. The theatre was primarily devoted to the exploration of the actor's realm. The company once went en masse to see a film and lecture presented by Richard Foreman at Bard College and afterwards bombarded him with accusations about his dictatorial manner of directing.

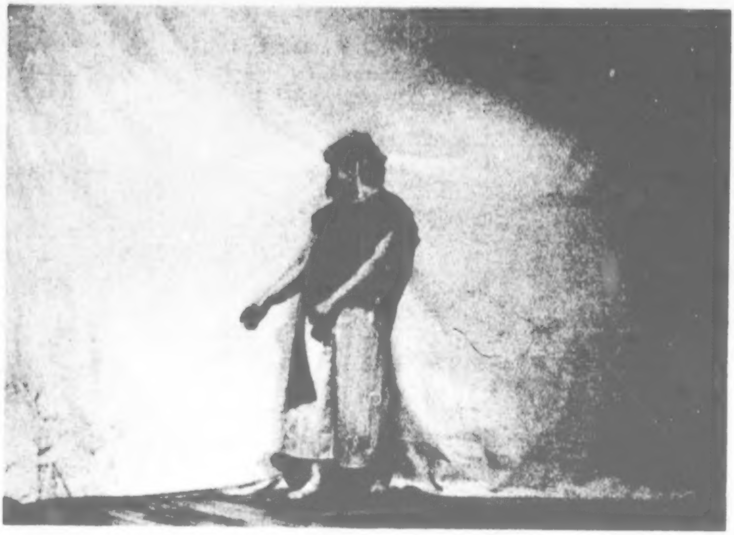
> *We said he had absolutely no trust in his actors. "How can you do this to the actor? It's immoral!" We were so righteous. When I moved to New York City, I started going to see plays at his loft. This was before he was taken under the wing of the avant-garde. I'd go and I'd hate it. But I'd always come back. He obviously has a very strong vision.*
>
> *My feelings have changed about dictating. I think there are two distinct ways of directing, and the extremes are Richard Foreman on the one hand and Andre Gregory on the other. Gregory will rehearse for months and months and simply laugh or not laugh. Those are his reactions. That is how the actors know whether to set something or not. I'm not an extremist one way or the other.*

Anne Bogart's adventurous evolution as a director has involved generous measures of experimentation and instinct.

> *It all comes to trying to find the electricity in the theatre, trying to wake up inside myself when I'm looking at something. It's like cooking. You taste something. You don't know what the particular ingredients are that make it taste right, but you know when it's right, you know when it's wrong. That's where you get your direction.*



Macbeth



Macbeth

Documentation of *Out of Sync*

Out of Sync, "a moving play," directed by Anne Bogart and written by Bogart, Jessica Litwak and the acting company, was presented from February 28 to March 23, 1980 in Manhattan's East Village.

Actors:	Nic Nastasie	John Fistos
	Peter Kassov	Harry Gantz
	Karina Stein	Jessica Litwak
	Edith Warner	Mary Tepper
	Zagreb Lifschultz	Norbert Klassen

Guides: Barry Davison, Brian Jucha, Gayle Tufts and Richard LaGravenese.

Out of Sync is a journey that begins in an East Village cafe. When reserving a ticket, audience members have been given instructions to assemble at the Odessa Restaurant at 7:50 p.m. where they meet a guide, pay for a ticket and receive a program. At 8:00 Bogart appears and leads the group (of between 20 and 30 people) to a second floor loft in a building one block away. Act I begins as the audience enters the loft and is seated.

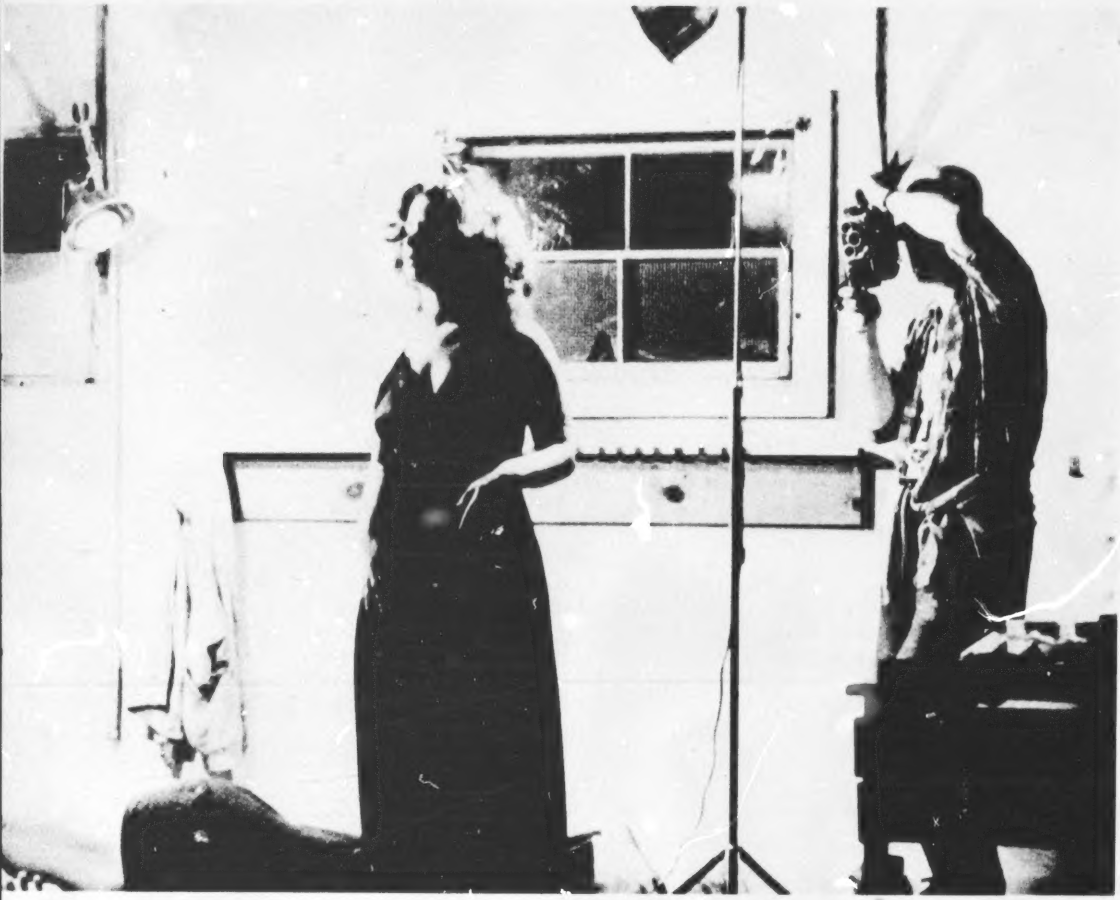
The audience sits facing a scene in progress at the other end of the sparsely furnished room. Nic is filming Peter and Karina, who are on a sheet-covered mattress on the floor, surrounded by brightly-lit photographic lamps. Peter lies on the mattress, dressed in pants and a T-shirt. Karina stands above him in a long black negligee and black gloves. As Nic gives curt directions, Karina and Peter make love in a series of precisely choregraphed movements: she lowers herself to the bed, looks away, looks at him; they embrace, kiss, roll over ("Quick flip," orders Nic); after she moves slowly down his body, the action is interrupted. The movements are repeated as Nic tries different camera angles and gives impatient notes to Karina on her performance.

The filming breaks down as Karina and Nic argue. There are problems with the film; he says, "All you think about is motivation," and she responds "All you think about is structure." He tries to convince her to abandon her plan to leave that night for Rome and to stay with him instead. Peter attempts to pacify them; failing, he preoccupies himself lifting weights.

Nic anxiously wants to finish the filming before his half-sister and her lover, both famous filmmakers, arrive. They have been working on the scene for hours. Nic finally admits he doesn't know what he's doing. Nothing satisfies him. Karina tries to reassure him by talking about her own insecurities. Nic defines his intentions: "to explore elements of passion in abstraction, broken down into frames."

Peter and Nic put away the film equipment and set up a projector and chairs facing a screen where the filming had taken place. Karina sits on the floor, drawing a picture. The doorbell rings; she runs off into the darkened rooms behind the audience as Peter answers the door. Nic is changing his clothes; as Zagreb and Edith enter, he is pulling up his pants.

Peter awkwardly converses with Zagreb, who carries a birdcage. Simultaneously Nic and Edith talk—he has pulled her away from the others. He wants her to help him persuade Karina to stay with him, not to go to Rome. He is also in need of money. At his mention of it, Edith breaks off the conversation and turns to the others.



Edith and Zagreb will be leaving soon for Turkey to shoot a film. Edith says she had planned on filming in Afghanistan, but of course had to change her plans. Peter says, "Fucking Russians," and an awkward silence follows. There is an obvious, though unspoken, difference in sensibilities.

Nic shows his film of Peter and Karina, pacing anxiously in the room as [illegible] other three watch. Edith makes comments throughout, citing Nic's stylistic sources, she mentions film noir, Cocteau and a long list of Italian directors, and she laughs and sighs loudly. Nic shuts off the projector in the middle of the film, bitterly apologizes for overstepping his bounds by presuming to make films, and runs out of the loft.

Edith justifies herself to Zagreb and Peter, both of whom stand aiming lamps in her direction. She says Nic anticipated a negative response from her before she saw the film. Zagreb quotes John Wayne: "You gotta do what you gotta do."

Karina enters wearing a white dress. Edith praises her performance, introduces her to Zagreb, and exits through a door onto the roof. Karina gazes in reverent awe at Zagreb.

Edith returns and dispatches Peter to look for Nic. Peter, who is content to leave Nic alone, goes reluctantly. Edith disappears into the back rooms saying, "I want to wash my face."

Karina asks Zagreb about Europe; she has romantic notions about life there. She turns on a tape recording of Keith Jarrett's Koln Concert. She tells him of her idea to leave later that night for Rome, where her favorite filmmaker ("Bucatoni") is starting a new project. She emulates Monica Vitti. Zagreb encourages her to tell him more.

As Karina talks, Zagreb turns on the projector; we see her standing in front of the movie screen telling of wanting to be a great actress as black and white images of her flash by. She also speaks of her experiences with a Marxist commune, a performance in Soho in which her striptease in a wheelchair "was really a statement about fascism vs. democracy." She has been through numerous self-awareness trainings: est ("nothing happened"), Rolfing, meditation and so on.

Peter and Nic are heard shouting in the stairwell outside the loft. Zagreb turns off the projector. He seems amazed by Karina's detailed account of her life. He awkwardly offers her a cigarette. They smoke without speaking. Zagreb exits into the back rooms, saying "Nice to meet you."

The first act is over. The spectators are directed to move their chairs to face the opposite direction. Lights are turned off in the room where the audience sits, now facing the kitchen in which Karina begins to prepare dinner. On the back wall of the kitchen is a travel poster of Italy. Also in that wall is a door leading to other rooms. The entrance from the big room where the audience sits to the smaller kitchen forms a proscenium. To the right of the proscenium is the exit to the stairs.

Peter and Nic enter from the stairwell. Peter puts music on the stereo: "Paris Encounter" by Stephane Grapelli and Gary Burton. Edith enters from the back; she has taken off her coat and wears a brilliant green dress. Zagreb follows her in. Edith makes a speech about Nic's psychological weaknesses: guilt, dependence, fear of success. Nic turns the music off and leaves the loft to go buy champagne. Peter and Edith, who is carrying the telephone, exit into the back.

Karina and Zagreb are alone again. He shows her photographs from a recent exhibition of his pictures. She cuts an apple. From offstage, Edith is heard shouting into the phone: "There's a war in Afghanistan! . . . Asshole!" The noise of a television set is also heard. Zagreb tells Karina he must see her again; she agrees to meet him in two weeks in Rome. She gives him a self-portrait she has drawn. He asks her if she wants anything from the store. She wants a quarter pound of parmesan cheese.

Zagreb goes to the door, opens and closes it, remaining in the loft. He is out of sight of the kitchen, where Karina has donned an apron in the design of the Italian flag and is listening to Italian langauge tapes while cooking. Nic reenters the loft. Zabreb asks him, "Who is she?" Nic answers, "She's wonderful, isn't she?" He tells Zagreb that she loves to cook. Exiting, Zagreb says, "You don't cook, do you?" and shuts the door. Nic opens the door and shouts after him that he does, he has cooked for years. Shutting the door, Nic stands out of sight of Karina and Edith, who has just come into the kitchen.

Edith talks to Karina about Europe. Rather than pleading Nic's case, she encourages her to go. Nic enters the kitchen, leaves the champagne, and goes into the back.

Edith talks to Karina about what clothes to take, while putting her hands on Karina's waist and thighs. They stare at each other for a moment, then kiss. Karina gives a photograph of herself to Edith, who doesn't remember having asked for it. They sing a French song together, about "une femme fatale."

The doorbell rings. Karina moves to answer it as Nic enters from the back; Edith passes by him, saying, "Well, Nic—I talked to her."

Karina asks Nic to cut carrots; he peels an apple instead. Peter enters, and Karina asks his advice on whether or not she should go to Rome. Zagreb enters from the stairs and stands out of sight. Karina and Peter are roughhousing; Nic gets angry. Peter searches for an address book. Karina stands absentmindedly stirring and spilling cream sauce on the floor, dreamily talking about Rome. Only Zagreb listens. Edith enters with a poster of Bunuel's film, *The Discreet Charm of the Bourgeoisie*, and hangs it on the wall. Peter talks but his words are lost in the commotion; ice trays and silverware rattle as the table is set and Edith makes herself a drink.

At the height of the noise and activity, Edith walks toward the spot where Zagreb sits, out of sight. She reaches around the corner and places her hand on his shoulder. Noise and movement cease during this brief tableau.

Karina breaks the silence: "Dinner's ready." They sit down to a meal of Fettucine Alfredo, salad and champagne. The dinner-table conversation revolves around the question of whether or not the Italians are the only people who can make movies. Peter vehemently believes so and rattles off a long list of Italian filmmakers. Karina, swept along, enthusiastically agrees. Nic disagrees. Another silence follows. He explains that he, too, can make films. Peter strikes a pose, crossing his legs and throwing his head back; Karina places an egg in his mouth and kisses him. Nic says, "Like that."

Edith makes a speech about how all she ever wanted for Nic was happiness, but when he presses her for her reaction to his film, she gives a long, almost brutally detailed critique of its problems. When Peter tries to interrupt, Edith remarks that the girl he sleeps with was also her lover, and Zabreb's, and reveals that Peter and Karina were sleeping together when Nic was falling in love with her. Edith has managed to insult and upset everyone. Nic, Karina and Zagreb leave the room.

Peter puts music on the stereo—Teddy Pendergrass playing "Come On Over to My Place." He and Edith move into the room where the audience sits. They dance. His movements are sensuous; hers are angular. Karina enters carrying a suitcase and sits in a chair near the door. Nic enters, goes to the door, and pauses. He says, "I'm so sick of this fucking self-indulgence." He asks Karina to dance with him. She refuses.

Zagreb enters the room. He asks Karina to dance, and she says yes. As they begin to dance, Peter changes the music to Pearl Harbor and the Explosions playing "Driver." The two couples dance. Nic joins them, in a frenzied, shaking dance. The others stop to watch him. He stops dancing and runs out of the loft.

Peter changes the music again—this time to Donna Summer singing "Hot Stuff." Peter and Karina perform a choreographed disco dance. Zagreb and Edith get their coats and start to leave. Karina stops dancing and runs after Edith to give her the photograph she has forgotten. They stand on the stairs while Peter and Zagreb talk about food preferences. It seems to be a metaphor for sex, but Zabreb appears unaware of it—there is a language barrier. Karina returns, and Zagreb gives her his birdcage. He leaves with Edith. On the stairs, he is heard shouting at her to "shut up"; she yells back at him.

Karina stands looking at the birdcage. Peter suggests they go find Nic. She says she won't go to Rome. They leave the loft, turning out the lights and locking the door. Act II is over.

The audience is led out of the building, down several streets and through a playground. From the sidewalk the group walks down a precarious stairway to a courtyard surrounded by tenements. The court is familiar; it was the setting for part of the film. From the courtyard the spectators pass through a brick-walled corridor, turn a corner, duck under a fire escape, and eventually come to a basement whose windows are illuminated. Karina, Peter and Nic are inside on a bed covered with a red sheet. The scene is watched through the windows. The spectators are voyeurs to a love scene as the actors go through a series of movements like those in the first scene of te play, but as they repeat the movements they become progressively faster. The prolog to Wagner's *Tristan und Isolde* is playing. Peter wears the T-shirt and pants he wore in the opening scene. Karina wears a beige negligee. Nic wears a T-shirt—his pants are pulled half-off.

The journey of the audience to the basement is the opposite of the journey in the film. The first shot of the film is of Karina, viewed through the basement window by Peter; the scenes then progress through the subterranean passageways and courtyard to the loft (the unfinished scene being filmed at the opening of the play).

The movements of the lovers become faster and faster; finally Nic breaks away and runs out of the room and the building, pulling up his pants.

The audience is led inside, through a dingy corridor, past the boiler room and into the basement.

Act IV is watched while standing against two walls of the basement room, which is littered with pornographic magazines and has a couple of photos of Monica

Vitti on the walls. Besides the homemade bed, there is a chair and a ladder for furnishings.

Karina is on the phone to Edith as the audience enters, telling her that Nic's departure is an emergency that can't wait until the morning. Peter lies on the bed. Karina hangs up and goes to him; they kiss. She breaks away and stands in the corner. There is a long pause. She takes a cassette tape from a nail in the wall and makes a tape recording for Nic with a machine on the ladder. She tells Nic that she is leaving for Rome; she is sympathetic, but determined to go.

Peter gets up and puts a shirt on. He asks Karina if she needs money. They hug, and he shoves money into her pocket. Edith and Zagreb enter, and Karina leaves. Zagreb calls her back to remind her of their date in Rome; she says she will remember, but it is not clear from her expression whether or not she will be there. Peter leaves shortly after Karina.

Zagreb and Edith carry on a bizarre conversation. In German, he asks her to let him go; he loves Karina and wants to be with her. Holding up a magazine, she screams that Nic has garbage all over his floor. Zagreb continues pleading with her. She analyses him—it's a middle-aged crisis. As his pleas become more desperate, she tells him that to leave her would be to give up art. She reminds him of his genius—"You break down cliches by raising cliches to an art form." Finally she throws off her coat. Underneath she wears black pants and boots and a lacy camisole. She begs him not to leave. He stares at her for awhile, then says "Okay."

Peter's voice is heard from outside. He has watched the scene through the window. He yells that they are responsible for Nic "going off his rocker," and adds, "You call that a relationship? It's pathetic!" Zagreb and Edith ignore him.

The audience is led out, back through the passageways to the street. The journey continues, to a sidewalk three blocks away (on Second Avenue). The audience stands along a fence, looking across the street to where Nic, shivering in his T-shirt, stands in front of a bank. After a few moments, a car pulls up in front of the audience. Peter gets out and runs across the street to plead with Nic. His words are inaudible.

Nic starts to leave, then stops. Peter approaches him, putting his hand on Nic's shoulder. Nic grabs him, and they fight. Nic falls to the sidewalk and lies there crying. Throughout the scene the view is periodically obscured by passing cars and buses.

Peter gets Nic to his feet and across the avenue. Nic is heard saying he has a new idea for a film. Peter gently puts Nic in the car, then gets in and drives away with him. The play is over.

Yvonne Rainer's
Journeys from Berlin/1971
by Ann Sargent-Wooster

Before 1970 Yvonne Rainer's career conformed to the general outlines of the other dancers of the Judson Church group (T30). The dance sections of her multimedia events combined formal dance steps with everyday movements in a nonhierarchical order. In 1970 she traveled to India with the Grand Union. There she became fascinated with the classical theatre of India and for a time followed the touring Kathakali, whose performances lasted all night (T50). This experience with the impact of a storytelling form caused her to focus on narrative and on film. Both had previously been in her work, but they were now given greater prominence. By the mid-1970s she had stopped performing entirely and devoted herself exclusively to film. In a 1971 essay she wrote,

> *I'm no longer interested in mixed media. You can either make a movie or you don't make a movie. I didn't make movies. I made choreographic exercises that were meant to be viewed with one's peripheral vision.* (Yvonne Rainer *Work 1961-73)*

Her ambition from this time on was to make feature-length films.

In the late 1960s, Rainer had begun to use personal, psychoanalytic and "found" narrative material in performances that included slides, captions on blackboards, and other storytelling devices. The first of her four feature-length films, *Lives of Performers* (1972), a kind of predecessor to *A Chorus Line*, was based in part on the talking improvisations of the Grand Union and included sections of performances. The idea of narrative based on a partial exposition of character often rooted in psychoanalysis remained strong in her next two films, *A Film About a Woman Who. . .* (1974) and *Kristina Talking Pictures* (1976). Both were set in limited loft interiors whose vistas and events suggested the space of the mind. Rainer's latest film, *Journeys from Berlin/1971* (1980), is no longer limited to individual psychology in the context of the New York artistic community. The film's involvement with the politics of terrorism, suicide and women's issues gives it a new scope for Rainer.

The emphasis is placed on reading and listening almost to the exclusion of sight. Following the practice of Godard and others, Rainer separates vision from the spoken and written texts, using five different kinds of repeating material that is heard or read. The verbal material includes:

1. *Crawling titles cataloging the increasing political oppression in Germany from 1953 to the mid-1970s that finally made political protest a crime. The titles end with the deaths of a group of terrorists known as the Baader-Meinhof gang in prison in 1976-1977.*

2. *Passages from a young girl's diary (Rainer's own written in the 1950s detailing her burgeoning political awareness).*

3. *The voices of two domestic intellectuals, a woman and a man (Amy Taubin and Vito Acconci) who argue about and analyze 19th century and contemporary terrorism, read memoirs of revolutionaries and prepare dinner. The Russian revolutionaries of the 1870s are referred to as "the Russian Amazons" and the "Nihilists" and include Vera Feigner and Vera Zasulich. These are contrasted with the German terrorists of the 1970s, especially the Baader-Meinhof gang. The writings of one of its leaders, Ulricke Meinhof, are quoted extensively. They also read from the memoirs of Alexander Berkman, Angelica Balabanoff and Emma Goldman. Descriptions of Alexander Berkman's attempted assassination of industrialist Henry Frick and Vera Zasulich's successful assassination of Trepov form long narrative sections.*

4. *A 50-year-old woman (Annette Michelson), designated as The Patient, undergoing a talking cure with a therapist who changes gender—man, woman, boy. The various therapy sessions are the only extended portions of the film in which speech and lip movements are synchronized. The Patient speaks in fragmentary sentences or in paragraphs composed of tangential remarks.*

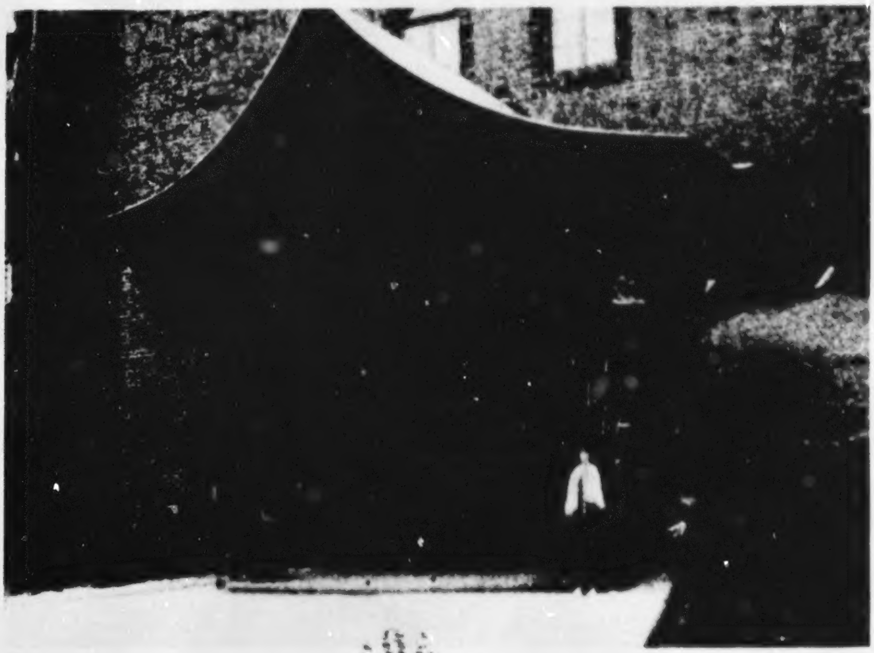
5. *Relatively short miscellaneous complementary or contrapuntal scenes also in sync—a recorder lesson, a young man in an interior stroking a cat and later, explaining a tin-can radio, etc.*

Rainer has indicated that her primary focus was the verbal texts and that the visual sections involved "work" for the viewer. Following the structure of the spoken and written texts, the visual aspect of the film is broken into repeating kinds of material. Only two sections are in sync. Little of the material consistently overlaps particular individuals speaking. The visual material includes:

> 1. *Stonehenge from the air. This corresponds to the girl reading from her diary.*
> 2. *Berlin and the Berlin Wall seen from the air.*
> 3. *The Patient at the therapist's, a large room with changing background activity, much of it resembling truncated versions of Rainer's earlier dances.*
> 4. *Pans of mantelpieces treated as mutable collages full of changing objects. Many, but not all, of the objects relate to incidents described in the text.*
> 5. *A couple pacing in front of a building with a pagoda-shaped canopy.*
> 6. *Scenes in black and white and color seen from a moving train and from house windows.*
> 7. *A pan of a street in Berlin.*

Rainer indicated that any of the people, especially the couple pacing outdoors, could be interpreted as representing people mentioned in the text.

The film uses vision in an unusually limited way to provide nuances and accents to the text. In many cases the visuals are merely space markers, illustrating the passage of time while attention is focused on listening to someone reading or speaking. The scenes out of train windows can be read as literal or figurative



symbols of journeys or of the passage of time. The shots out the windows of houses, where the buildings are stationary and the traffic moves, might stand for stasis or reverie. Passages from the girl's diary are coupled with aerial views of Stonehenge; the girl's sense of onrushing immediacy is contrasted with the eternal, timeless nature of the ruins.

Asynchronization of vision and verbal text leads to meaning generated by repetition and displacement. The limited amount of visual pleasure offered by the film lies in waiting for the repetition of certain images, hoping to understand their meaning by sheer visual accumulation. The absence of narrative leads to what Rainer has termed the "elbow-wiggle" response. In a composition made of discontinuous pieces, the audience looks for something to identify as structure and begins to respond to the recognition of particular recognizable movements as if they were normal climaxes.

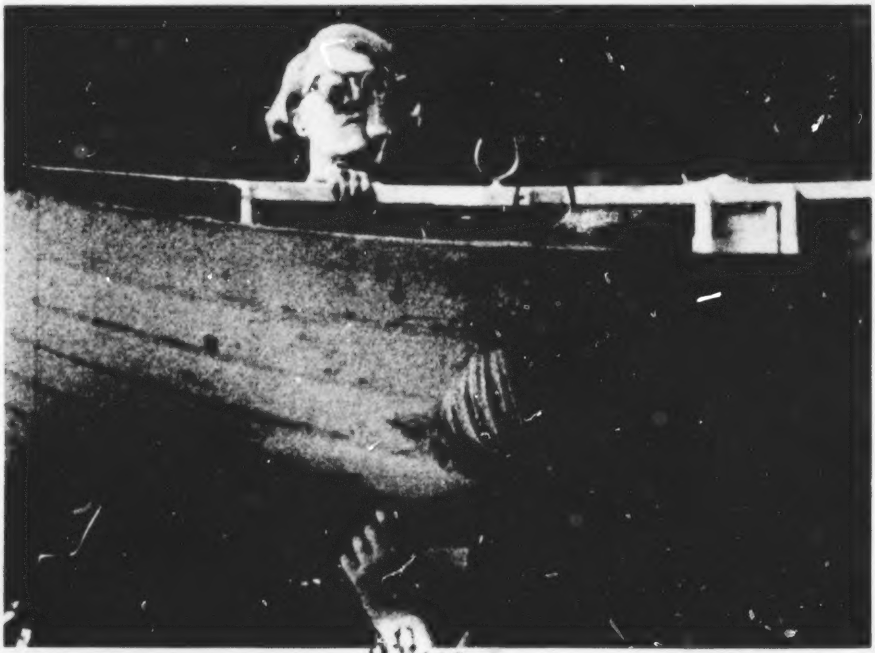
The returning blocks of visual material supply one kind of structure. Built into the scenes at the therapist's and in the pans of the mantelpieces are objects that relate to incidents in the text, providing a second subtle infrastructure of vision and text. When these objects initially appear, they seem to be simply genre details of the scene they occur in, until a subsequent reference to them in the text reveals their emblematic nature. A few of the incidents, such as the appearance of a severed arm on the mantelpiece, are startling, surrealistic events. The arm, dotted with a grey-green substance, appears to be detached from the body and still living. Such images lose some of their mystery when they are later revealed as symbolic representations of textual descriptions; they have prefigured later events without commenting on them. Three-quarters of the way through, the patient opens a section of monolog by saying,

> *I saw two women sitting by the wall. One woman's hand and forearm were covered with mud, lingering on their faces where their beauty lies like a fish in the sand and the unique stupidity that comes with certain types of self-absorption or that excess of sensitivity that comes so early and stays so long.*

Thus, symbols interlock the visuals with the text and are aids to continuity that restore a measure of importance to vision in the otherwise predominantly aural film.

This type of linkage occurs repeatedly, with images appearing most frequently in the first half of the film and the textual half of the visual/verbal couplets emerging in the later portion. The pliers that the patient fingers and comments on in the first therapy session are spoken of much later in connection with a victim of torture in Iran: "The burns on my feet are all infected, and the pliers used on me have left nasty gashes." A line about rhubarb lying in the back seat of a revolutionary's car is preceded by the image of stalks of rhubarb placed on the edge of the mantel. A steaming mound of spaghetti appears incongruously in the center of the mantel; later, the patient remarks in a passage describing loss of contact with the body, "No dreams. Much spaghetti, purply mass." Boxed baby shoes appear on the mantel after the patient has regressed: "I've got a sundress and white knickers and new shoes. It's all on the wrong foot." A gun appears in the hand of the severed arm before passages in the text describing two assassinations using a gun. Candy kisses in a brandy snifter are seen in several shots before the patient says, ". . . quell untidy desire with candy kisses." What we later realize is a tin-can radio appears on the mantel prior to the scene where a young man describes how to make a tin-can radio and explains its importance to underdeveloped countries. A boat appears as an extension of the mantel before the analysand is shown in a boat or says, "I've never socked it to anybody, why rock the boat."

The presence of the image before the relevant text is a harbinger of meaning, wordless and mysterious. The audience places its own meaning on it. Thus the visual symbol serves to loop meaning. When the object first appears, its meaning is subject to the viewer's interpretation. When the passage mentioning the object finally occurs, the section it initially appeared in is recalled, linking and laminating both the object and the viewer's response to it on to the ongoing material, adding to but not destroying the original chain of associations. The visual images resemble



the material patients offer analysts. Their later "exploration" by the verbal text resembles the construction or organization the analyst places on the material the patient has produced. Rainer in this case functions as the analyst and we, the viewers, as the patient (the objects have become our "memories"). Audience and filmmaker are engaged in the construction of a fictional discourse, which is schematized in the specific relationship of object to text in Rainer's film.

Other attention-getting devices serve to further unite the text and vision. In an almost subliminal commentary, the negative was "flipped" or turned over during the printing of the following passage.

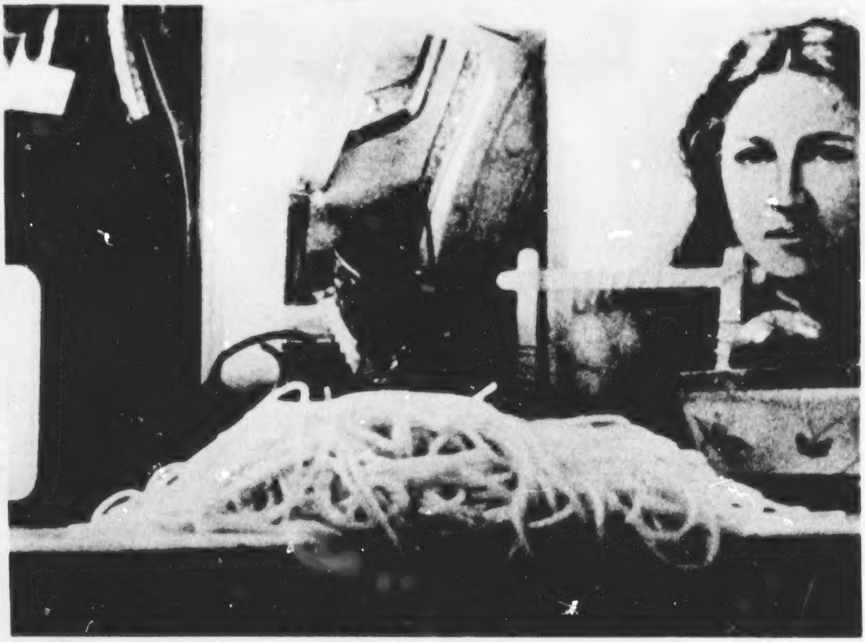
> **Patient:** *I know the essential element in being alive. You have a large mouth and you can approximate a smile when one corner rises at the end of a sniff. But it doesn't fool anyone. It is really a sneer. You always seem to be talking out of the side of your mouth. You, too, are the person I invent.*

The flipped film makes the analysand the hypocritical person talking out of the side of her mouth.

In another section, the disruption of the visual/verbal bond comments on the dialog:

> **Patient:** *. . . What do I know about family life?. . . Some members of the family don't say anything.*

At this point the analysand continues talking, but no sound is heard, identifying her with the repressed members of the family who are unable to compete in familial combat.



Rainer's method is characterized by working in fragments—the separation of sound from what the eyes see, the laminating of text upon text, or the intrafragmentation of text. *Journeys from Berlin/1971* lashes together a variety of issues—from terrorism to personal happiness—in an elliptical structure. Ideas are often introduced by one character, parried by a second, parsed by a third and abandoned, just to appear again in the type of construction she calls "paratactic." Parataxic materials at once "share both narrative and non-narrative characteristics."

> *For example, a series of events containing answers to when, where, why, whom, gives way to a series of images, or maybe a single image, which, in its obsessive repetitiveness, or prolonged duration or rhythmic predictability, or even stillness, becomes disengaged from story and enters this other realm, call it catalog, demonstration, lyricism, poetry or pure research. . . .*
>
> ("A Likely Story," paper
> delivered at Edinburgh Film Festival, 1976)

Working with discrete and dialectical fragments aligns Rainer's work with the forefront of contemporary critical thinking; Julia Kristeva recommends in "The Ruin of Poetics" the use of a "multi-valent, plural vocal text whose various discourses confront each other in opposition" and which is an apparatus for exposing and exhausting ideologies in their confrontation." Roland Barthes has characterized this plurality of texts as a position that makes the reader no longer merely the consumer but the producer of the text.

Abrogating the traditional passivity of the film, *Journeys from Berlin/1971* demands from the viewer a more active relationship to the material. Individual issues can be separated from their crosshatched matrix in an approach to the subject matter that is more literary than filmic. Central to the film are the role of woman, suicide and political commitment.

Women

Even more emphatically than in Rainer's other films, "Journeys" redressed gender conventions in film. Not only are the examplars of political violence women but the unconventional choice of an almost-immobile, 50-year-old female psychiatric patient as "hero" attacks women's role as erotic icon in film. Normally, a male character represents the active principle. The patient's psychological striptease, revealed in richly patterned monologs is the only onscreen activity of any duration. The viewer is asked to identify with the patient. In both active and passive forms, she becomes a mirror for the viewer. The importance of this process of identification is underscored by Rainer's decision to make the patient the only individual to be subject to a prolonged fixed shot focused on her face (the only exception being the brief sequence of Rainer at the end). The significance of the camera placement is made more powerful when one realizes it necessitated the building of ramps in the room behind the patient to display the multi-leveled background mise-en-scènes at different angles while the camera continued its undeviating scrutiny of the patient.

Rainer leaves no doubt as to the patient's attitudes about being a woman. Her commitment to autonomy is one of the first ideas she articulates, defining herself as "your original independent woman, earning her own living, thinking by her coat tails." She also spent a lifetime "ignoring male workers, avoiding their sexual stares." Marriage and the family are seen as situations offering no security or emotional comfort for women and are treated with aversion. Marriage is presented as a legal expediency. In the patient's opening remarks, she speaks of marriage as a purely legal manuever of two-generation's duration:

> *. . . . Rejection and disappointment are two things I've always found impossible to take. Look, it's very simple. We got married to take his first wife's demands for more child support off his back. Marriage didn't mean shit to me—neither commitment or capitulation. My mother and father already had two children before they got married. It was strictly a legal formality dictated by embarrassment and linguistic (pause). And you know something else? There appears to be no instance in 19th century Russia in which a man followed his wife into exile in Siberia.*

There follows one of the patient's characteristic multi-thought paragraphs in which she grapples with the professional woman's conflicts when she is asked to cloak her unacceptable femaleness in an artificial show of strength or a false unemotional mien. The patient then speaks of the disruption of an artistic career (thus identifying her as an artist.)

> *If I seem to have gained a hard-won dignity, it's thin ice over a bottomless lake of disbelief. . . The funny thing is that if I behave as though I'm not so fragile, then it is more a matter of deploying the bourgeois artist even at the expense of artistic activity. Might not the interruption of my artistic career be an essential part of new function? But what do you know about symbolic illumination?*

The disruption of a career generally results when a woman is expected to put familial commitments ahead of her work. As more bits of the patient's life are presented, it becomes apparent that she has not had a family, perhaps just so those pressures would not be brought to bear on her. The patient's fears are those of all women who have chosen to pursue careers.

The analysand also expresses an intuitive fear of the psychoanalytic process, which is denounced as "psychiatrification" by Ulricke Meinhof in a letter read at the end of the film. Therapist's expectations of what benefits men and women should achieve from analysis are different. In her diary, Anais Nin quotes her therapist, a man:

> **Rank:** *It was man who invented the soul. When the neurotic woman gets cured, she becomes a woman. When the neurotic man gets cured, he becomes an artist.*

In a later passage, the patient attacks the position of women in Freudian-based therapy when she says, "And furthermore, my cunt is *not* a castrated cock. If anything, it's a heartless asshole!", thus attacking therapists and critics such as Freud, Lacan and Metz who continue to view women as castrated men.

Families and motherhood are denounced verbally in a variety of ways, none of which have any counterpart in the visuals except for the loaded mantelpiece, which symbolizes the middleclass home among its many purposes. The breakdown of

Over a Barre

Meinhof's marriage may be the source of some of the terrorist's political activism. One of the couple who are heard but not seen says:

> **She:** *It's interesting: one of the first violent things Meinhof did was to lead a bunch of people in tearing up that house in Hamburg where she had lived with her husband and two children. He had been unfaithful to her... It would have been easy to make the connection.*

In one of the patient's monologs, families are seen as oppressive:

> *.....everybody talks very fast. Everyone changes the subject. Everyone talks louder than everyone else. Everyone asks for things. Everyone tells everyone what to do and what's what. Everyone knows what love is. Some members of the family don't say anything.*

The amalgamation of sexual desire into this setting is conceived of as impossible. The patient comments, "You can't feel motherly and horny at the same time." Her rejection of the role of mother is found in her continuing remarks to the boy therapist.

> *Intake, fertilization, gestation, exhaustion. It must sound a little gross to use the internal combustion engine as a model for procreation; it makes the newborn sound like a piece of shit. Mm...it wasn't supposed to come off quite that way. I'm very sensitive to something you quoted from Virginia Woolf sometime back, something nice about motherhood...Anyway, since motherhood has always been as alien to me as manhood....*

One of the Russian Amazons relates her political feelings of inequality and injustice to her mother.

> **She:** *Those experiences in early childhood. I saw that there were those who commanded and those who obeyed, and probably because of my own rebellion against my mother, who ruled my life and for me who personified all despotism. I instinctively sided with the latter.*

The young girl's embryonic political feelings can also be seen to emerge from faults in the traditional bourgeois family where the wife stays home and is financially and emotionally dependent on her husband.

> *The tears are here again. Brush them away. Something just happened. Mama just finished listening to one of those one-hour dramas, a real tragedy. She said, "I shouldn't listen to those stories, they really move me too much. But I don't know what else to do with my time." And the tears came. Sometimes I feel an overwhelming tenderness for her. I don't know if it's love... Daddy is away. I am relieved that he is away, yet I often pity him. I look at the picture of them on my dresser. I have always loved that photograph. He was 34 and she was 20. They were young once and joyous together. What happened?*

Suicide and Death

Suicide and its corollary, murder, are a dominant theme in "Journeys," involving the patient, the terrorists and the girl. At the beginning, the complaint that has driven the patient to the psychiatrist is shrouded in ambiguity, but by the end of the film it is revealed that a suicide attempt has caused her to undergo a talking cure. In the first sync section of the film, the patient says "...I never held the threat of (pause) over your head." Suicide is implied in the structure of the sentence, which continues without pause to "...an average of five or six blacks executed by hanging every Monday morning for terrorism at Pretoria's Central Prison." This passage prefigures the alleged suicides of the Baader-Meinhof gang at the film's end. The first session at the therapist's concludes with the remark, "West Berlin has the highest suicide rate in the world." In A. Alvarez's *The Savage God,* from which the remark derives, he goes into more detail:

> *.....the highest suicide rate in the world is that of the thriving mini-democracy of West Berlin. Its rate is more than twice that of West Germany as a whole. The city is a model of what Durkheim called "anomie"—moral, cultural, spiritual, political and geographical alienation. Added to that, a high proportion of the population is middle-aged and elderly.*

West Berlin is seen as a proper place for the attempted suicide of a middle-aged woman and also an appropriate theatre for the terrorist's flirtations with death and suicide. Early on, other references to death and suicide appear. In the titles, reference is made to terrorist-related violence causing death. Also mentioned are the suicides of various seriously ill individuals.

The patient is estranged from experience, which exists for her only as memories qualified by rationalization. The room behind her supplies vistas and

events she is unaware of. She only turns around twice, and each time the act of looking has no visible effect on her. Even the changing gender and age of her therapist has no impact. The patient is presented as having lost all context and meaning from her life, a prime state, as Emile Durkheim has pointed out, for egoistic suicide. She talks about losing touch with the body, stuffing herself with carbohydrates and sugar, and "quelling untidy desire with candy kisses"—the type of life that equips a person for suicide.

> *Then one day they electrocute themselves on a fan in a hotel room in Bangkok. Now it is women who die forlorn and solitary deaths in warm climates, isn't it?*

Aligning herself with the woman she has just described, the patient unwraps a stick of gum and puts it in her mouth.

As Durkheim has indicated, an individual's age and marital status are key factors in determining their suicide potential. Youth and marriage are anti-suicide agents. The patient fits neither of these criteria, being older and opposed to marriage. Women are identified as being less suicide prone by Durkheim because their primary attachment has historically been to the family.

> *Woman kills herself less, and she kills others less, not because of physiological differences from man, but because she does not participate in the collective life in the same way.* (Suicide)

Rainer's women do not have the benefit of women's traditional insulating influences. The patient is a potential suicide because of her solitariness and her age. The terrorists also have abdicated from the family and have taken on "masculine" political commitments, rendering them vulnerable to altruistic suicide by their group and to the anger of anomic suicide, which manifests itself frequently as homicide.

While we see a slow-motion autocrash with a dummy being slammed into the dashboard with the force that would kill a person, the young girl describes her thoughts about suicide and a near-miss from death.

> *It is long ago and far away. The night before I was halfheartedly picturing myself throwing myself out of the window and splashing all over the backyard. It went round and round in my head. The resultant pain and grief and weeping. And the thought of the longed-for nothingness. And the selfless body, twisted, broken... The next day I went cycling in Marin. On the way back from Tiburon, I suddenly looked up to see a chartreuse convertible hurtling at me. Then I heard screaming tires, and a hot forceful breath brushed by cheek... I had nearly been killed. I had been near death. When the hot breath left, I felt in a terrible instant the pulse of life within me...*

Teenage suicide is presented as a romantic condition produced by adolescent angst. It is engendered by the mind in isolation and is only capable of execution as long as the person remains divorced from the reality of death. The close proximity of real death is sufficient to shock the individual back to life.

The terrorists remain as complete romantic heros who see the power of their acts without visualizing the consequences to themselves in terms concrete enough to dissuade them. Following the above passage, a statement by the revolutionary, Vera Feigner, is read by the Female Voice:

> *...we made a strong distinction between our fates and the radiant prospects of the revolution. About ourselves we were always pessimistic: We would all perish; they would persecute us, lock us up, send us into exile and hard labor (we didn't even think about capital punishment then) I don't know how the others felt, but for me the contrast between a radiant future for the people and our own sad fate was extremely influential when I was considering how to apply my socialist beliefs.*

In altruistic suicide, the individual suppresses his own anxieties in a kind of mystical commitment to a cause that may result in the loss of his life. Altruistic suicide is common to religious and political movements alike. The choice of homicide and suicide by political groups is a further example of their adoption of a political program grounded in the notion that criminal acts are a way of opposing and hopefully destroying society. The acceptance of suicide or murder is automatically an attack on society.

Descriptions of two assassinations form the longest continual narrative. They are not only attempted or achieved murder, but also potential suicides. The terrorists know their lives will be forfeited in the process. Zasulich, in her description of her assassination of Trepov, speaks of even the decision to commit the act as being a kind of death, a transition from the self she has been to the self she will become:

> *Then I lay down to sleep. It seemed to me I was calm and totally unafraid of losing my free life; I had finished that a long time ago. It was not even a life anymore, but some kind of limbo, which I wanted to end as soon as possible.*

In *Suicide*, Durkheim has commented that the altruistic suicide seeks "to strip himself of his personal being in order to be engulfed in something he regards as his true essence." After she has killed Trepov, Zasulich says,

> *But every minute my joy increased . . . because I found myself in an extraordinary state of the most complete invulnerability, such as I had never before experienced. Nothing at all could confuse me . . .*

Both of the assassinations of Frick and Trepov are a cross between altruistic suicide and anomic suicide, in which rage against a person who has wronged you (or a class of people) is focused on the murder of selective individuals. In doing this, the assassin is willing to sacrifice his/her life for the collective good. That these assassinations are also suicide attempts is clear from the absence of precautions either individual takes to protect himself from capture.

At the end of the film, the titles list the deaths of various members of the Baader-Meinhof gang in prison. Although they are called suicides, using the neutral tone of newspapers, the implication, strengthened by the dialog of the couple, is that they are murders. Whether suicide or murder, the prisoners have found a final purpose for their "disposable" lives in a sacrifice of the body to a common cause, a characteristic of altruistic suicide. Their alleged final communique, read by the male and female voices, states:

> **She:** *. . . our last and strongest weapon is our bodies, a weapon which we have used collectively. . . .*
>
> **He:** *. . . They can't prevent a prisoner dying—which means in any case they will be responsible. . . . in the eyes of the public (and it will happen in the public) this murder will remain their responsibility.*

The terrorists, having committed themselves to political activity, have reduced and focused their choices. No longer suffering from the existential anguish of too

many choices (the patient's dilemma), they are free to express feelings. Commitment and confinement give them a capacity for wonder that is denied the patient.

> **Therapist (female):** *Unlike the victim of torture in Iran who, in her choicelessness, was able to write, "I know that I shall never see another sunset."*
>
> **Patient:** *It never crossed my mind that I might see another brilliant fall sky.*

Only with the decision to kill herself is the patient's narcissistic depression overcome, and a concentrated attention arises that fixes itself on action, giving her a purposefulness that has been previously lacking. Revealing what drove her to the therapist, the patient begins to talk of suicide in the same language the assassin used in describing his attempt on Frick's life.

> **Patient:** *It was almost like having a sense of mission. If a stone can have a conviction and purpose, then that describes how I moved unswerving toward my objective.*

Her next words are comparable to Zasulich's:

> **Patient:** *I had no compassion for the life I wanted to end. I had succeeded in suppressing everything—thought, feeling, doubt—everything. I had achieved complete autonomy and perfect detachment at the same time. I was a free agent. I was empty and impregnable at the same time.*

To the accompaniment of a series of alternating shots between scenes out a window and the therapy session, the female therapist and patient examine suicide as a "failure of the imagination. . . a failure to imagine what might lie outside one's experience."

> **Therapist:** . . . *Working with people . . .*
> **Patient:** . . . *a failure to imagine a world*
> **Therapist:** . . . *inhabiting one's own history . . .*
> **Patient:** . . . *where conscious choice*
> **Therapist:** . . . *resisting the inequities close at hand . . .*
> **Patient:** . . . *an effort . . .*
> **Therapist:** . . . *risks in love . . .*
> **Patient:** . . . *might produce mutual respect*
> **Therapist:** . . . *mistakes*
> **Patient:** . . . *between you and me.*

The terrorists' deaths are seen as having the "right stuff," of encompassing life and transcending it in marked contrast to the tawdry death the patient would have achieved if she had succeeded in committing suicide—the death of "you and me," which is the end product of our lack of imagination. The Amazons are portrayed as artists, their murders and violent acts are their art. They have invented a world and inhabit it. They are creatures of their own imaginations who push their "inner life" into action in the world. In contrast, the patient and, by extension, the viewer, is passive and a receptacle ("empty and impregnable at the same time").

The fugal strains of suicide dominate and color the characters' decisions. However, at the end of the film, the various characters move away from its celebration. The terrorists are dead, and the patient and the girl no longer entertain suicidal thoughts. Even the female half of the couple gives up the romanticism that makes suicide desirable. Much as she might like to have "right feeling, passion maybe—the kind of passionate conviction that Russian Amazons had," she concludes, "I know it's pure fantasy."

Politics

Until now, Rainer's work has not been concerned with overt political expression. She traces the political cast of this film to the experience of living in West Germany in 1976-1977, which reawakened the "kind of political option" she had not experienced since she was a teenager and read Emma Goldman's and Alexander Berkman's writings in her parent's house. Her father was an anarchist, part of a community of Italian anarchists—bohemians and poets, including Kenneth Rexroth—that met every Friday night at the Workman's Circle in San Francisco.

> *Violence wasn't advocated, but my father made me aware of the history of American anarchism from Berkman to Sacco and Vanzetti. These were household names when I was growing up.*
>
> *So this film was an attempt to bring together powerful themes of my youth and current events as well as my own experience of psychoanalysis as a peculiarly American phenomenon.*
>
> (quoted by Noel Carroll in
> *Soho Weekly News*, 13 Feb. 1980)

Various types of political activity are portrayed. The young girl's diaries represent, in her own private and individualistic way, an intense burgeoning moral awareness, the kind of nascent consciousness that might lead her to radical political activity as an adult. She begins to be aware of class divisions and sees herself in the role of oppressor in transactions with sales people. Later, on a visit to the Victor Equipment Company for Junior Goals Day, she is overcome by the bleakness of the workers' existence and the differences between bosses and workers.

> *. . . . and the girls in the offices—I met one in the "Ladies Room." She said, "They give me things to type, and I don't know what they mean." Even if all the paperwork could be dispensed with, someone must do the work with the machines. But all one's life, all day long? What a terrible existence. And that fat president, sitting back in his swivel chair and laboriously telling us what a democratic organization he has. . . .*

These vignettes are interleafed with descriptions of the motivations of upper-class 19the-century Russians who dedicated their lives to the people.

In many forms, terrorism is a leitmotif of the film. Descriptions of terrorism taken from the terrorists' writings and other sources form a cohesive thread throughout, and the terrorists are the only figures represented as capable of action. The terrorists' acts and decisions are reduced to epiphany-like summations in the various spoken and written texts, giving them a patina of glamor. Their presence as the film's "stars" worthy of admiration is underlined when the therapist rifles a pack of photographs in which pictures of movie stars are interleafed with pictures of the "Amazons." Rainer normalizes their violence visually, placing it within domestic contexts. Photographs of the "Amazons" appear on the mantel as familial memorabilia. A gun, a prehistoric stone weapon and a photograph of imprisonment are also displayed on the mantel, providing a repeated visual reminder of the artifacts of violence and terrorism.

The terrorists are seen as driven to their deeds because they could conceive no other way to respond to the conditions they saw in society. Early in the film, Vera Feigner is quoted as saying:

> *...My past experience has convinced me that the only way to change the existing social order was by force. If any group in our society had shown me a path other than violence, perhaps I would have followed it; at the very least, I would have tried it out....*

The female voice's commentary sees decisions such as Feigner's as arising from their personal struggles against their oppression as women. The perspectives of observer and observed are different. After many of her friends have been executed in Russia, Figner phrases her decision to leave medical school in Switzerland in terms of a total commitment of unspecified origin.

> *After the decision was made, my mind was finally at rest, and I vacillated no longer. I set to work without a backward glance. Social concerns had gained ascendance over personal ones for good.*

An alternative view of the terrorist could be that they are bunglers and failures and their violent acts are meaningless gestures in a society that is even more violent than they are. In both stories of attempted assassination, the assassin's gun fails to go off; in Zasulich's case, she fires again and kills her target. Generally, political motivations are de-emphasized or nonexistent. Even when the motivation for an action—such as the assassination of Trepov—is given, the material situating the event is separated from it by such a great distance that the origins are forgotten by the time the deed is described. Decontextualized and divorced from their social matrix, terrorist acts are deprived of much of their power.

When the unseen couple discuss honorable forms of political activity, they note that only the upper bourgeoisie ever turn their lives inside out and align themselves with the workers, going so far as to work side by side with them in the factories. The girl's acute discomfort when waited on by a salesperson or on her visit to a factory are first-person presentations of the type of emotions that could cause such a shift.

Terrorism is presented as a more glamorous choice, but the context makes clear it is not necessarily the most admirable.

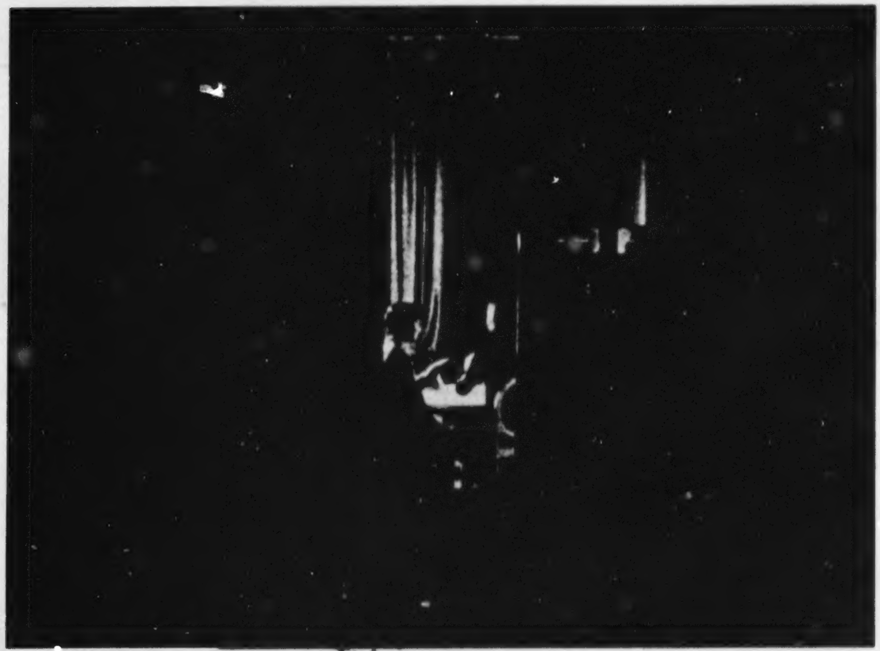
> **She:** *...I wonder if the middle class German radicals went to work in the factories the way you hear about educated leftists doing in western countries...My point is that the Baader-Meinhof people preferred robbing banks and kidnapping.*

> **He:** *. . . and anyway, the RAF didn't rob banks just to get money. They believed in lawbreaking as something positive. Meinhof wrote that the progressive significance of department store arson lies in the* criminality *of the action.*

From the film's perspective, the terrorists are given the capacity for feeling and commitment. The purplish passage from Emma Goldman's *The Psychology of Political Violence* read by the female voice is an example of the abject sincerity beyond the bonds of the "modern" soul permitted to the terrorists:

> *Compared with the wholesale violence of capital and government, acts of violence are but a drop in the ocean. That so few resist is the strongest proof how terrible must be the conflict between their souls and unbearable social iniquities.*
>
> *High-strung, like a violin string, they weep and moan for life, so relentless, so cruel, so terribly inhuman. In a desperate moment the string breaks. Untuned ears hear nothing but discord. But those who feel the agonized cry understand its harmony; they hear in it the fulfillment of the most compelling moment of human nature.*

As the above passage indicates, the terrorists are perceived as romantic heroes who are burdened by a superabundance of feeling to which they are forced to respond. The female voice, with whom the audience is meant to identify, offers the comment, "That's nutty," to Goldman's emotional prose. Further discussion and commentary by the unseen voices compares terrorism to the mass suicides of Jonestown. Terrorism is placed in perspective as a theatrical and emotional gesture of great symbolic value but of minor significance to the overall picture when compared to the quantitatively greater volume of other forms of murder and violence.



And yet the terrorists are lovingly regarded because of their capacity for feeling and commitment. They are viewed from outside with a nose against-the-glass wishfulness, as if, "Wouldn't it be nice if, instead of experiencing the modern condition of deadness, it would be possible to be aroused and have a central focus of life, as they do."

The terrorists are also free from the crippling rationalizations of the patient and can employ themselves as single-focus weapons. They are regarded from outside as having simpler and more heroic lives by characters who do not feel their own activities have meaning. Their capacity for meaningful activity is what separates them from us and is the basis of the admiration accorded them. The religious nature of their dedication is carried further. Even their lives have touches of the monastic. After having been jailed, their cells are those of a monastery but they also have a luxuriousness of objects and serenity that is denied the other characters. The loss of freedom, the end of activity, is presented as the goal they have been seeking.

It would be wrong to see Rainer as advocating terrorism. Her final position is shown by the concluding scenes. First, she talks emotionally about a destruction of Berlin during the war after seeing a war film about Berlin. The last shot is a continuation of the recorder lesson. This final scene stresses the continuity of the past (she is learning from someone else with more knowledge and experience) and is a symbol of renewal, especially the continuous capacity of renewal within a person's lifetime. This romantic Lentian hope is not couched in political terms but in personal ones. The terrorists of the 1970s are dead, the patient has declared herself in control of her life, daily life goes on for the voices, so the film's concluding attitude is one of confidence in the future for the individual.

__Ann Sargent-Wooster__ teaches art history at Kean College and writes for various publications on art, performance and video.

NEW BOOKS

Dance Data, edited by A.J. Pischl and Barbara Naomi Cohen. New York: Dance Horizons, 1801 East 26th Street, Brooklyn, N.Y. 11229.

A series of "Delvings into Dance History," reproductions of otherwise unavailable dance resource materials.
Dance Data No. 1, "Two Charts: (1) The Development of Classical Ballet and the Various Types of Ballet [and] (2) A Chart for the History of Dance in Society and in Theatre as Ballet" by Joan Lawson. 20 pp. (8½" x 11") illus. $1.50 (paper).
Dance Data No. 2, *The Borrowed Art of Gertrude Hoffmann*, includes "The Borrowed Art of Gertrude Hoffmann" by Barbara Naomi Cohen; "Album Souvenir de 'La Saison Russe,'" a facsimile of eight pages from the 1911 souvenir program; "On Your Toes—America! The Story of the First Ballet Russe" by Oliver M. Sayler and Marjorie Barkentin, excerpts from an unpublished biography of Morris Gest. 28 pp. (8½" x 11") illus. $2.95 (paper).
Dance Data No. 3, *Dance Scholars' Newsletter*, edited by Barbara Naomi Cohen. 28 pp. (8½" x 11") $1.50 (paper).
Dance Data No. 4, *The Franchising of Denishawn*, includes "The Franchising of Denishawn" by Barbara Naomi Cohen; "Ampico Reproducing Piano Co. Instruction Manual," "Dance Descriptions from the 1929 Dance Masters of America, Inc. Convention," and "Denishawn Dances," facsimiles of instructions and music for dances created and taught by Ruth St. Denis and Ted Shawn. 48 pp. (8½" x 11") illus. $5.95 (paper).

Gay Theatre Alliance Directory of Gay Plays ed. by Terry Helbing. New York: JH Press, P.O. Box 294, Village Station, N.Y. 10014., 1980. 122 pp. (6" x 9"). $5.95 (paperback).

An alphabetical listing of plays in English that have major gay characters, both male and female, and/or predominant gay themes. There is a brief description of each play and information on the number of characters, the settings required, its first production and its publication (if any). Appendices list "lost" plays for which no information could be obtained, and 13 lesbian and gay theatre companies.

Dan Graham: Video-Architecture-Television, Writings on Video and Video Works 1970-1978 ed. by Benjamin H.D. Buchloh. Halifax and New York: The Press of the Nova Scotia College of Art and Design; New York University Press, 1979. 99 illus. 89 pp. (11" x 8½"). $17.50 (hardcover), $9.95 (paper).

Documentation of 23 of Dan Graham's performances and installations using video. There are essays, a selected bibliography and a chronology.

Performance and Politics in Popular Drama ed. by David Bradby, Louis James, and Bernard Sherratt. Cambridge, New York, *et. al.*; Cambridge University Press, 1980. xii + 331 pp. (6" x 9") 22 illus. $27.50 (hardcover).

Subtitled "Aspects of popular entertainment in theatre, film and television, 1800-1976," the book is divided into three parts. The first deals with the 19th century. Among the nine articles, some of them quite short, are pieces on Pixérécourt, the music of melodrama, water drama, equestrian drama, and the relation of the mummers' play to popular drama. The second part deals with the 20th century. Included among the six articles are ones on Meyerhold and Eisenstein, Piscator's *Hoppla, We're Alive*, the Prolet Buehne in the U.S., the Workers' Theatre Movement in England, and the October Group in France. The third part contains two general articles on "problems and prospects." An appendix contains the script of the Prolet Buehne agit-prop play "Tempo, Tempo" (1930). There is a bibliography and indexes.

By Popular Demand: Plays and Other Works by the San Francisco Mime Troupe. San Francisco: The San Francisco Mime Troupe (855 Treat St., San Francisco, CA 94110). 1980. 302 pp. (5-3/8" x 8½") over 165 illus. $8.00 (paperback).

The illustrated scripts of four plays and four short "*actos*" performed by the San Francisco Mime Troupe since 1970. *False Promises/Nos Engañaron, San Fran Scandals, The Dragon Lady's Revenge* and *The Independent Female, or A Man Has His Pride* are the plays; *Frijoles, or Beans to You, Frozen Wages, Los Siete* and *Eco-Man* are the *actos*. There is also a section on the construction of the Troupe's portable stage, a photo-documentation of their production of Brecht's *The Mother* (T66), and the words and music of eight songs. (Joan Holden, whose work is described in this issue of *The Drama Review*, wrote or co-authored all of the plays.)

Women and Performance Issue

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Carol Rosegg, pp. 25, 37, 38.
Gary Scholchet, pp. 72, 75, 76, 77, 78, 80, 81, 83.
Smith College Theatre Department, pp. 8, 9.
Conrad Ward, pp. 15, 19.

LIST OF BOOKS RECEIVED

HISTORY AND THEORY

Actors on Acting by Joanmarie Kalter. Sterling Publishing Co., New York, N.Y., 1979 (hardcover) $10.95.

Afro-American Poetry and Drama, 1760-1975: A Guide to Information Sources, William P. French, Michel J. Fabre, Amritjit Singh and Genevieve E. Fabre, ed. Gale Research Co., Detroit, Mich., 1979 (hardcover) $22.

American Drama Criticism: Interpretations, 1890-1977, Floyd Eugene Eddleman, ed. Shoe String Press, Hamden, Conn., 1979 (hardcover).

American Regional Theatre History to 1900: A Bibliography by Carl F.W. Larson. Scarecrow Press, Metuchen, N.J., 1979 (hardcover) $10.

Arthur Rackham: Color Illustrations for Wagner's Ring. Dover Publications, New York, N.Y., 1978 (paperback) $6.

British Alternative Theatre Directory, Catherine Itzin, ed. John Offord Publications, East Sussex, 1979 (paperback) £3.50.

British Theatre Since 1955: A Reassessment by Ronald Hayman. Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1979 (hardcover) $10.95.

Buffo: The Genius of Vulgar Comedy by Anthony Caputi. Wayne State University Press, Detroit, Mich., 1979 (hardcover) $17.95.

The Comic Matrix of Shakespeare's Tragedies by Susan Snyder. Princeton University Press, Princeton, N.J., 1979 (hardcover) $12.50.

Contemporary Authors, Vol. 81-84, Frances Carol Locher, ed. Gale Research Co., Detroit, Mich., 1979 (hardcover) $48.

Contemporary Chinese Theatre by Roger Howard. Heinemann Educational Books, Hong Kong, 1979 (hardcover) $6.50.

Contests, Festivals and Grants in Film and Video, Photography, T.V., Radio Broadcasting, Writing, Poetry and Playwriting, Journalism, Alan Gadney, ed. Festival Publications, Glendale, Calif., 1978 (paperback) $15.95.

Costumes and Settings for Staging Historical Plays: Vol. 4, The Georgian Period by Jack Cassin-Scott. Plays, Inc., Boston, Mass., 1979 (hardcover) $10.

Costumes and Settings for Staging Historical Plays: Vol. 1, The Classical Period by Jack Cassin-Scott. Plays, Inc., Boston, Mass., 1979 (hardcover) $10.

Costumes and Settings for Staging Historical Plays: Vol. 3, The Elizabethan and Restoration Period by Jack Cassin-Scott. Plays, Inc., Boston, Mass., 1979 (hardcover) $10.

Critical Analyses in English Renaissance Drama: A Bibliographic Guide by Brownell Salomon. Popular Press Bowling Green, Oh., 1979 (paperback) $4.

Criticizing the Critics by John W. English. Hastings House, New York, N.Y., 1979 (hardcover) $13.95.

Dada Spectrum: The Dialectics of Revolt, Stephen Foster and Rudolf Kuenzli, ed. Coda Press, Madison, Wis., 1979 (hardcover) $15.95.

A Dance on the High Wire by Jed Harris. Crown Publishers, New York, N.Y., 1979 (hardcover) $10.

Designs for "The Three-Cornered Hat" by Pablo Picasso, Parmenia Migel, ed. Dover Publications, New York, N.Y., 1978 (paperback) $5.

The Drama Of Speech Acts: Shakespeare's Lancastrian Tetralogy by Joseph A. Porter. University of California Press, Berkeley, Calif., 1979 (hardcover) $12.50.

The Dublin Drama League: 1918-1941 by Brenna Katz Clarke and Harold Ferrar. Dolemen Press, Dublin, 1979 (paperback) $5.

Entertainment: A Cross-Cultural Examination, Heinz-Dietrich Fischer and Stefan Reinhard Melnik, ed. Hastings House, New York, N.Y., 1979 (paperback) $9.

An Essay on the Meaning of Hamlet: A Director's Approach by Keith Alayre Anderson. Saylorville Printing, Des Moines, Ia., 1978 (paperback).

Evita, First Lady: A Biography of Eva Peron by John Barnes. Grove Press, New York, N.Y., 1979 (hardcover) $8.95.

Evita: The Legend of Eva Peron by Andrew Lloyd Webber and Tim Rice. Avon, New York, N.Y., 1979 (paperback) $5.95.

Evita: The Legend of Evita Peron, 1919-1952 by Andrew Lloyd Webber and Tim Rice. Drama Book Specialists, New York, N.Y., 1979 (hardcover) $8.95.

A Few Words About William Shakespeare's Plays by Ulrich Braker, Derek Bowman, tr. Frederick Ungar, New York, N.Y., 1979 (hardcover) $8.50.

The First Public Playhouse: The Theatre in Shoredtich, 1576-1598, Herbert Barry, ed. McGill-Queen's University Press, Montreal, 1979 (hardcover) $9.95.

Flamboyant Drama: A Study of the Castle of Perseverance, Mankind, and Wisdom by Michael R. Kelley. Southern Illinois University Press, Carbondale, Ill., 1979 (hardcover) $12.95.

The Floating Islands: Reflections with Odin Teatret by Eugenio Barba, Ferdinando Tavia, ed. Thomsens Bogtrykkeri, Holstebro, Denmark, 1979 (paperback).

Garcia Lorca: A Selectively Annotated Bibliography of Criticism, Francesca Colecchia, ed. Garland Publishing, New York, N.Y., 1979 (hardcover).

Genet: A Collection of Critical Essays, Peter Brooks and Joseph Halpern, ed. Prentice-Hall, Englewood Cliffs, N.J., 1979 (paperback) $3.95.

The Genius of Shaw, Michael Holroyd, ed. Holt, Rinehart and Winston, New York, N.Y., 1979 (hardcover) $18.95.

Georg Büchner by William C. Reeve. Frederick Ungar, New York, N.Y., 1979 (hardcover) $10.50.

George S. Kaufman: His Life, His Theatre by Malcolm Goldstein. Oxford University Press, New York, N.Y., 1979 (hardcover) $20.

Golden Ages of the Theater by Kenneth Macgowan, William Melnitz and Gordon Armstrong. Prentice Hall, Englewood Cliffs, N.J., 1979 (hardcover) $11.95.

A Guide to Critical Reviews, Part III: Foreign Drama, 1909-1977 by James M. Salem. Scarecrow Press, Metuchen, N.J., 1979 (hardcover) $20.

Handel Arts Set, Beatrice Handel, ed. John Wiley & Sons, New York, N.Y., 1978 (hardcover) $87.50. Includes: ***The National Directory for the Performing Arts and Civic Centers*** and ***The National Directory for the Performing Arts/Educational.***

A History of English Costume by Iris Brooke. Eyre Methuen, London, 1968 (paperback) £3.50.

Index to Plays in Periodicals by Dean H. Keller. Scarecrow Press, Metuchen, N.J., 1979 (hardcover) $35.

The John Wayne Story by George Carpozi Jr. Arlington House, New Rochelle, N.Y., 1979 (hardcover) $10.95.

Make 'Em Laugh by Eric Midwinter. George Allen & Unwin, London, 1979 (hardcover) $13.50.

The Making of the Great Westerns by William R. Meyer. Arlington House, New Rochelle, N.Y., 1979 (hardcover) $20.

Marlowe: The Critical Heritage, Millar MacLure, ed. Routledge and Kegan Paul, Boston, Mass., 1979 (hardcover) $18.50.

Measure for Measure, the Law and the Convent by Darryl F. Gless. Princeton University Press, Princeton, N.J., 1979 (hardcover) $15.50.

The Mediaeval Period, Vol. 2 by Jack Cassin-Scott. Plays, Inc., Boston, Mass., 1979 (hardcover) $10.

Metafictional Characters in Modern Drama by June Schlueter. Columbia University Press, New York, N.Y., 1979 (hardcover) $15.

Miller: A Study of His Plays by Dennis Welland. Eyre Methuen, London 1979 (paperback) £2.95.

Modern American Drama: A Study in Myth and Tradition by N.S. Pradham. Humanities Press, Atlantic Highlands, N.J., 1979 (hardcover) $9.

Modern Japanese Drama: An Anthology by Ted T. Takaya. Columbia University Press, New York, N.Y., 1979 (hardcover) $17.50.

My Drama School, Margaret McCall, ed. Robson Books, London, 1978 (hardcover) $14.50.

Neil Simon: A Critical Study by Edythe M. McGovern. Frederick Ungar, New York, N.Y., 1979 (hardcover) $12.50.

The New British Drama: Fourteen Playwrights since Osborne and Pinter by Oleg Kerensky. Taplinger Publishing Co., New York N.Y., 1979 (hardcover) $11.95.

The Ornament of Action: Text and Performance in Restoration Comedy by Peter Holland. Cambridge University Press, New York, N.Y., 1979 (hardcover) $29.50.

Peter Shaffer by Dennis A. Klein. Twayne Publishers, Boston, Mass., 1979 (hardcover) $10.95.

Post-War British Theatre by John Elsom. Routledge and Kegan Paul, Boston, Mass., 1979 (paperback) $9.50.

Rachel Crothers by Lois C. Gottlieb. Twayne Publishers, Boston, Mass., 1979 (hardcover) $10.95.

Radio Comedy by Arthur Wertheim. Oxford University Press, New York, N.Y., 1979 (hardcover) $18.95.

Renaissance Drama and the English Church Year by R. Chris Hassel Jr. University of Nebraska Press, Lincoln, Neb., 1979 (hardcover) $15.

School and Community Theater Management: A Handbook for Survival by Lawrence Stern. Allyn and Bacon, Boston, Mass., 1979 (hardcover) $16.95.

Sound in the Theatre by Harold Burris-Meyer, Vincent Mallory and Lewis S. Goodfriend. Theatre Arts Books, New York, N.Y., 1979 (hardcover) $12.95.

Spettacolo Theatrale Del Novecento by Gianni Poli. Marietti Editori, Torino, Italy, 1979 (paperback) 3.900 lire.

Stage Lighting by Richard Pilbrow. Drama Book Specialists, New York, N.Y., 1979 (hardcover) $17.50.

Swearing and Perjury in Shakespeare's Plays by Frances A. Shirley. Allen & Unwin, Winchester, Mass., 1979 (hardcover) $25.

Ta'ziyeh: Ritual and Drama in Iran, Peter J. Chelkowski, ed. New York University Press, New York, N.Y., 1979 (hardcover) $28.50.

Le Théâtre d'Edward Albee by Liliane Kerjan. Librairie C. Klincksieck, Paris, 1978 (paperback).

Theatre, Film and Television Biographies Master Index, Dennis La Beau, ed. Gale Research Co., Detroit, Mich., 1979 (hardcover) $35.

The Theatre of George Devine by Irving Wardle. Eyre Methuen, London, 1979 (paperback) £5.95.

The Theatre of Erwin Piscator by John Willett. Holmes & Meier, New York, N.Y., 1979 (hardcover).

Theatre of the Oppressed by Augusto Boal. Urizen Books, New York N.Y., 1979 (paperback) $5.95.

Theatrical Set Design: The Basic Techniques by David Welker. Allyn and Bacon, Boston, Mass., 1979 (hardcover) $18.95.

Training the Young Actor by Michael R. Malkin. A.S. Barnes & Co., Cranbury, N.J., 1979 (hardcover) $9.95.

The Vision of Modern Dance, Jean Morrison Brown, ed. Princeton Book Co., Princeton, N.J., 1979 (hardcover) $12.

Waiting for Death: The Philosophical Significance of Beckett's "En Attendant Godot" by Ramona Cormier and Janis L. Pallister. University of Alabama Press, University, Ala., 1979 (hardcover) $13.75.

Young Gemini by Alec McCowen. Atheneum Publishers, New York, N.Y., 1979 (hardcover) $7.95.

PLAYS

Able's Will by Christopher Hampton. Faber & Faber, London and Boston, Mass., 1979 (paperback) $5.95.

American Days by Stephen Poliakoff. Eyre Methuen, London, 1979 (paperback) £1.60.

An Audience Called Edouard by David Pownall. Faber & Faber, London and Boston, Mass., 1979 (paperback) $5.50.

Baal by Bertolt Brecht, John Willett and Ralph Manheim, ed., Peter Tegel, tr. Eyre Methuen, London, 1979 (paperback) £1.95.

Bertolt Brecht: Collected Plays Volume 2iii, John Willett and Ralph Manheim, ed. Eyre Methuen, London, 1979 (hardcover) £6.50. Includes: ***The Rise and Fall of the City of Mahagonny*** and ***The Seven Deadly Sins.***

The Best Short Plays, 1979, Stanley Richards, ed. Chilton Book Co., Radnor, Penn., 1979 (hardcover) $10.50. Includes: ***Room for One Woman*** by Samuel Shem, ***Cabin 12*** by John Bishop, ***Split*** by Michael Weller, ***Scenes from Soweto*** by Steve Wilmer, ***Blind Date*** by Frank Marcus, ***Brontosaurus*** by Lanford Wilson, ***The Image of Elmo Doyle*** by Richard France, ***Sailing*** by Michael Shurtleff, ***The Chinese Restaurant Syndrome*** by Corinne Jacker, ***Hopscotch*** by Israel Horovitz, ***Ernie's Incredible Illucinations*** by Alan Ayckbourn.

Between God and Man: A Judgement on War Crimes by Kinoshita Junji, University of Tokoyo Press, Tokoyo, and University of Washington Press, Seattle, Wash., 1979 (hardcover) $15.

The Blinkards by Kobina Sekyi. Rex Collings, London, 1974 (hardcover) $3.

Bully by Jerome Alden. Crown Publishers, New York, N.Y., 1979 (paperback) $3.95.

Close of Play by Simon Gray. Eyre Methuen, London, 1979 (paperback) £2.25.

Cravaggio by Michael Straight. Devon Press, New York, N.Y., 1979 (paperback) $4.95.

Deathtrap: A Thriller in Two Acts by Ira Levin. Random House, New York, N.Y. (hardcover) $8.95.

Dimetos and Two Early Plays by Athol Fugard. Oxford University Press, 1979 (paperback) $4.95.

The Dramatic Works of Denis Johnston, Volume II by Denis Johnston. Humanities Press, Atlantic Highlands, N.J., 1979 (hardcover) $35. Includes: ***A Bride for the Unicorn, The Moon in the Yellow River, A Fourth for Bridge, The Golden Cuckoo, Nine Rivers from Jordan, The Tain-A Pageant.***

Drinks Before Dinner by E.L. Doctorow. Random House, New York, N.Y., 1979 (hardcover) $8.95.

Egyptian One-Act Plays, David Woodman, ed. American University in Cairo Press, Cairo, 1979 (paperback).

Filumena by Eduardo de Filippo. Heinemann Educational Books, London, 1979 (paperback) £1.85.

The Great Lover and Other Plays by Alexandre Dumas, *pere*. Barnett Shaw, tr. Frederick Ungar, New York, N.Y., 1979 (hardcover) $13.50. Includes: ***The Great Lover, Kean, Young King Louis, Three Interludes for Moliere's "The Love Doctor".***

Holiday's End or Immolation in America by Mariquita Platov. Dan River Press, Meadows of Dan, Va., 1979 (paperback) $2.

The King, Belshazzar by Ernest Davis Green. Vantage Press, New York, N.Y., 1962 (hardcover) $8.95.

Laughter by Peter Barnes. Heinemann Educational Books, London, 1979 (paperback) $6.25.

The Monster of Karlovy Vary and ***Then and Now*** by David Mercer. Eyre Methuen, London, 1979 (paperback) £2.95.

Murderer by Anthony Shaffer. Marion Boyars, London, 1979 (paperback) $3.95.

The Naked King, The Shadow & the Dragon by Yevgheny Shvarts, Elisaveta Fen, tr. Marion Boyars, London, 1975 (hardcover) $12.

Nuevos Pasos: Chicano and Puerto Rican Drama, Nicolas Kanellos and Jorge A. Huerta, ed. Indiana University Press, Gary, Ind., 1979 (paperback) $3.

On Golden Pond by Ernest Thompson. Dodd Mead, New York, N.Y., 1979 (paperback) $7.95.

Pearl by John Arden. Eyre Methuen, London, 1979 (paperback) £1.95.

Plays: Four by Noel Coward. Eyre Methuen, London, 1979 (paperback) £1.95. Includes: ***Blithe Spirit, Present Laughter, This Happy Breed, Tonight at 8:30 (II).***

Plays of Confession and Therapy by August Strindberg. University of Washington Press, Seattle, Wash., 1979 (hardcover) $18.50.

Plays: One by Noel Coward. Eyre Methuen, London, 1979 (paperback) £1.75. Includes: ***Hay Fever, The Vortex, Fallen Angels, Easy Virtue.***

Plays: Three by Noel Coward. Eyre Methuen, London, 1979 (paperback) £1.95. Includes: ***Design for Living, Cavalcade, Conversation Piece, Tonight at 8:30 (I).***

The Ring Cycle: Young Lovers of the 21st Century by Melvin Gorham. Soverign Press, Rochester, Wash., 1979 (paperback) $5.

Runaways by Elizabeth Swados. Bantam Books, New York, N.Y., 1979 (paperback) $2.50.

Shout Across the River by Stephen Poliakoff. Eyre Methuen, London, 1979 (paperback) £1.50.

Sore Throats & Sonnets of Love and Opposition by Howard Brenton, Eyre Methuen, London, 1979 (paperback) £1.60.

Teendreams by David Edgar. Eyre Methuen, London, 1979 (paperback) £1.60.

The Trial of God Elie Wiesel. Random House, New York, N.Y., 1979 (hardcover) $8.95.